VINDICATION

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CIVILESTABLISHMENT

OF

RELIGION:

WHEREIN

Some Politions of Mr. CHANDLER, the Author of LITERAL SCHEME, &c. and an Anonymous LETTER on that Subject are occasionally consider'd.

WITH AN

APPENDIX containing a Letter from the Reverend Dr. MARSHAL, and an Answer to the same.

By J. ROGERS, D. D. Canon of WELLS, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON:

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M.DCC.XXVIII.



IN the following inquories I have endeavoured to vindieath the Right of the Charle Magallegie in chaolish some Relation I presumed the Againson could appear more impar-

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PREFACE.



N the following Inquiries I have endeavoured to vindicate the Right of the Civil Magistrate to establish some Religion. I presumed the

Argument would appear more impartial and less intangled, when asserted in general Principles and Conclusions, than if I had stop'd to observe in a particular Application of each, with what Advantage they recommend the Christian System. If the Establishment of some Religion be admitted, we may securely defy any Competitor with the Christian, to produce better or equal Pretensions to this Favour. For as Mr. Chandler has very

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justly

justly observ'd, a No Scheme of Religion whatsoever is so well calculated for the Welfare of Societies as this. A System so admirably sitted to promote the social Interests of Mankind, even a Magistrate who believed no Revelation, might be induced to establish from prudential Motives, and as the wisest Provision for his own and his Peoples Happiness; much more may it be allow'd, to engage the Zeal and Affections, of one convinced of its divine Authority.

When such a Religion is established, it will be intitled to those Distinctions of Encouragement and Protection, which the Nature of an Establishment implies, in a Degree and Measure proportioned to its moral Character, and beneficial Tendency. Particularly, if Reasons of Civil Prudence, and a Regard to the Order and Peace of the Community, require that the Religion established should be protected by Civil Sanctions from Insults and Invasion, more strongly will these

Pref. to Reflect. &c. p. 27.

Regards enforce the Protection of so pure, so peaceable, so excellent an Institution as this. The Christian Reader, as he passes thro' the general Conclusions on this Subject, will, I doubt not, apply each to our Holy Religion, with the additional Force arising from these Considerations.

To the Enemies of it I may observe, that whatever Kind or Measure of Opposition to an establish'd Religion is, in any Cases, justly censurable as a Civil Crime, will be so in a Degree of great Aggravation, when directed against so excellent a Religion as the Christian. My Conclusions, indeed on this Point, are general, and will extend in some measure to all Acts of Opposition to an Establishment, so far as the Peace, Order, or Virtue of the Commu nity are endanger'd by them: But nevertheless I would not be understood, to put all Actions of this Nature on a level, or to make no Difference between those who, under the Belief of Revelation, oppose only some Articles, Doctrines, or Rules of an establish'd Scheme, and those who deny A 3

deny all Revelation, and all Establishments. Regards of Civil Peace will themselves set these Cases at a wide Distance. Where the Christian Revelation (e.g.) or any particular Scheme of Religion under the Belief of it is established, a Toleration, as I have acknowledged, of open Dissention from some of its Rules. and joining in Assemblies separate from it may, in some Circumstances, not only confift with Civil Peace, but be necessary to secure it. While the great Articles of that Faith are agreed in, the several Parties, notwithstanding their Diversity of Judgment in some Particulars, may fill be presumed under the general Influence of its Authority and Sanctions, and to be restrain'd by the Awe of them, from transgressing those moral Precepts, on the observance of which the Welfare of Society will chiefly depend. But the Effect on Civil Peace must be very different from Attempts to Subvert the whole Authority of that Religion, and fet Men loofe from every Obligation of it; especially when nothing is offer'd in the place of it, but a wild Scheme of Deism, unden

der which every one must be left to collect a Religion, and consequently a Rule of Action, for himself, as his Ignorance or Passions shall happen to lead him. The Disparity of these Actions with respect to their Influence on Civil Peace, &c. must appear to every attentive Man, and will justify the Magistrate in a very different Treatment of them. And tho' all publick Disputations about Points of Religion, be the Matter of greater or less Importance in its felf, may justly and wifely be restrain'd by Civil Authority, when they produce, or apparently threaten, ill Effects on the publick Peace and Welfare, yet whenever the permission of them can be secured from any such Apprehensions, I have faid nothing against it. The publick Debate, indeed, of Points in themselves of very small moment, may become thus dangerous from a great Variety of accidental Circumstances; the Temper, Influence, or Character of the Persons engaged; the present Dispositions or Sentiments of the People, and the Applications of foreign or domestick Enemies to exasperate the Dispute, and form Parties-A Course A 4

Parties upon it. And 'tis also possible, in other Circumstances, that Men agreed, in the Essentials of Religion, may debate Questions of considerable Importance, without occasioning any Fewds, Diforder, or Danger to publick Peace: But it can never be expected, that Men shou'd preferve this Calmness and Temper, when all the Grounds of their own, and, in effect, of all Religion are deny'd, and the God whom they worship is blasphemed. Can the Magistrate think his own or his Peoples Happiness and Peace unconcern'd, in an Argument which persuades them to throw away a Religion, the best adapted to the Ends and Interests of Society that was ever offered to the Faith of Mankind, without any Equivalent? Which denies his Power to establish any Religion, and represents it to his Subjects as a Violation of unalienable Rights, and fundamental Reserves of human Liberty? Can the fame Motives, which may perfuade his Compassion, or Indifference in other Disputes, protest from his just Refentments such Schemes of License and Sedition as this?

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Men who acknowledge a divine Revelation, may possibly from different Apprebensions of its Import and Direction, esteem themselves obliged in Conscience, not only to refuse a Compliance with some Rules of an establish'd Scheme, but, in some Instances, to act in Opposition to them. And the' fuch Actions, when they manifestly endanger Civil Peace, will not be protected from the Censure of the Magistrate by the mere Plea of Conscience; yet where the Sincerity of that Plea may be presumed, both Humanity and Religion will persuade all the Tenderness towards it, that can consist with publick Security. But what Plea of Conscience, can a Deist offer, for opposing the Establishment of so harmless and beneficial a Religion as the Christian? A special Obligation from any revealed Command of God he will not pretend, and therefore no Christian Rules or Precedents can be apply'd to this Case. The Examples of Christ or his Apostles, of our Missionaries, or Reformers have been alledged indeed by others beyond their Extent and apt. proper

proper Inferences; but they cannot without the utmost Absurdity be offered by Him in a Piea of Conscience. A Jew or a Mahometan, who professes the Belief of a Divine Revelation, may imagin, or pretend himself obliged by the Authority of it, to oppose a Christian Establishment; But a Deist can pretend no Obligation on bis Conscience, but what must arise from some Principle of natural Reason. If Charity be assigned as that Principle, I have consider d and refuted that Pretenfe; and will venture to conclude upon the whole, that our Deists cannot offer even a Presumption of Conscience, for the publication of Books in direct Affront to our Laws and Constitution, and whose profess'd Intention is to extirpate the Belief, and subvert the Establishment of a Religion, which, under the most powerful Sanctions that can be apply'd to the Human Nature, enjoins every Virtue that can render Men happy in themselves, and useful to each other.

dorn'd a Throne, wish himself or his Peo-

ple a greater Felicity, than that the Precepts of the Gospel Should be universally obey'd throughout his Dominions ? And what Tenderness can be due, to open Attempts, not only to abolish this excellent Insitution, but introduce in the Place of it that Abomination of Desolation now recommended to us? A Project whose naturat and necessary Tendencies no Man, who has any Concern for the Honour, Virtue, or Happiness of bis Country, can reflect on without Dread and Abborrence. I have given the Reader a Sketch of them, Chap. iii. Sect. 4. and leave him to collect, what Reception so impious and de-Arustive a Scheme can merit from the Wisdom and Justice of a Christian State. The Endeavours of these Adversaries to Shelter themselves in a Crowd, and blend their Interests with that of our Difsenters, can impose on none but very weak and undiscerning Men. I affirm, indeed, in general, that all Acts of Opposition to the Laws of an Establishment, so far as they endanger Civil Peace, must be subject to the Restraint of Civil Power: But all Acts indulged by Law, are thereby declared Clared free from any Apprehension of such Danger. I have said nothing in Reproof of that Indulgence; neither can any thing represent it to more Disadvantage, than extending the Protection of it to the Liberties I have censured. Our Constitution has widely distinguished the Case of the Dissenters from that of Insidels; and they cannot more discredit that Distinction, than by owning the Alliance and joyning themselves to the Tents of these Men; or resenting any Severity in the Coercion of such Enemies, as an Insringment of Their Toleration.



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THE Necessity of Divine Revelation, and the Truth of the Christian Revelation afferted; in Eight Sermons. To which is pre-fix'd, a Preface with some Remarks on a late Book intitled, The Scheme of Literal Prophesy considered, &c. By John Rogers, D. D. 8vo.

INTRO-



INTRODUCTION.

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Distinction of some Persons from others by Office and Authority, is necessary to the Order and Ends of Society; and some Reserves of

Liberty to the govern'd Part, are necesfary to the Happiness of it: Both are necessary to a just Idea of Society, and must therefore in the Nature of the Thing be reconcileable to each other; and all the Difficulty in Questions on this Subject, lies in adjusting the Proportions of each. Affertions of Authority or Liberty are equally reasonable within their proper Restrictions, and equally unreasonable beyond them; for

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unbounded Liberty is at least as great an Absurdity as unbounded Authority.

In a Subject where Truth and Error lie so near to each other, divided by a Line in many Cases not to be discern'd without Care and Attention, and where Preingagements of Interest to one Side or the other are apt to bend and corrupt the Judgment, 'tis no Wonder to find great Perplexity in Mens Notions and Disputes, or that those who lie in wait to deceive or embroil Mankind. shou'd choose a Field of Controversy in which there is such room for all the Arts of Sophistry. While they keep in Generalities, (as fuch Disputants always do) some Truth will be in their Affertions, for the Sake of which they cannot absolutely be deny'd. To this they retreat for Cover whenever they are press'd. By a little Aggravation of the Conclusions they oppose, they can easily reprefent them as Excesses, with popular Topicks for Declamation and Invective. While the Minds of Men are thus amus'd with Generalities, and by artificial Ter-

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rors of one Extream driven towards the other, the real Point of Truth is easily kept out of Sight, and the Dispute between Liberty and Authority may on these Terms be carried on for ever: Bur if we can fix the proper Limits of each. we shall soon make them Friends, and put an End to all Confusion about them.

In this View I a formerly confider'd Ecclesiastical Authority. The Principles I fet before me as my Rule in that Enquiry were, That in the Christian Church as a Society fo much Authority must be acknowledg'd in the Superiors, as the Nature and End of Society in general, and of a Religious Society in special require; and more particularly fuch both for Kind and Measure, as by Divine Institution is ordained and appointed in that Society. On the other Hand that all Liberties should be reserved to the Inferiors, that can confift with the Exercife of fuch Authority. It is impossible

a Discourse of the Visible and Invisible Church and Review. B 2 for

for any one who keeps these Principles in View, and pursues them truly, to affert any thing injurious to either Superiors or Inferiors. If the Authority of the Superiors be stated within the Limits of this Rule, it cannot take from the Inferiors any Liberty which they have a Right to; for they can have no Right to any Liberties inconfistent with fuch Authority, as the Nature and Ends of the Society place in the Superiors. Every Member by the Terms and Stipulations of his Admission, must be suppofed to give up his Liberty in fuch a Meafure, and submit his Actions thus far to the Authority of the Society. I am not conscious to my self that I have in any Conclusion transgressed this Rule; I am fure I honeftly and carefully endeavoured not to do it; and was as follicitous to preserve the due Claims of Liberty, as to affert its proper Extent to Authority: And therefore thought my felf as little exposed to Party Resentments, as any Man can be who interpofes in a publick Dispute. But it seems those mean Discourses have unpardonably offended fome Men,

Men, and mark'd me out to their Paffions as a Name never to be mentioned without Reproaches. That Torrent of Revilings which Mr. Chandler has let loofe upon me, is indeed immediately directed against some late incidental Affertions. concerning the Civil Establishment of our Religion. But his b Acquaintance with what I formerly wrote of the Visible and Invisible Church, had, I perceive, possessed him with an old Spleen against me, which he rejoyced to give Vent to on this Occasion. And he does it with fo little Consideration, that a Differtation, whose profes'd Design is to reprefent the Unfairness and Impertinence of foreign, personal, and passionate Reflections in Disputes, is usher'd in with a Preface, which from the Beginning to the End is one continued Invective. My Person, Character, and Station in the Church, are treated with scurrilous Ridicule. I am reproached with the odious

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Pref. to Reflections on the Conduct of the Deifts.

Titles of a Persecutor, Incendiary, Dragooner, Inquisitor, and profess'd Enemy to Liberty; and very ingeniously recommended to the Whip, the Pillory, and the Gallows for my Correction-I thank God I have long fince learn'd to despise such Reproaches; and have observed in Experience that when Men throw Dirt, 'tis a pretty certain Sign that they want better Arms. I affure this Gentleman, the first Sentiment his Performance rais'd in me, was a Compassion to human Infirmity. I saw an Understanding very capable of Reasoning, lost in Diforder and Confusion, as soon as a Point in which his Prejudices lay was touch'd on. Instead of that calm dispassionate Search of Truth he pleads for, nothing appear'd but Heat without Light, and Rage without Strength; a profound Ignorance of the real Point in Question, and as little Justice in his Reflections, as Manners in his Address. I hope and believe, that Impatience of the Establishment which this Writer

² Pref. f. 22, 24, 32, &c.

discovers, is not the general Temper of the Diffenters. The Moderation and Indulgence which has been used towards them, deserves a better Return: And I am perfuaded no wife Man among them can imagine, that the Subversion of the establish'd Church could be attended with any Advantage to them. I had no Intention to have troubled this Gentleman, or myself, with any Notice of his Reflections: But fince the Importunity of another Adversary, and the Persuasions of some Friends, have induced me to confider the Authority of the Civil Magistrate in Matters of Religion, I would not wholly neglect him. I shou'd have consulted my Ease much more, if I had kept purely within the Referves of a Respondent. But I think the only reasonable End of Disputation is to bring Truth into its proper Light. which is generally much better done by direct Affertions of the Subject, than by the Wranglings incident to perfonal Controversies. Whatever appears material either in Mr. Chandler's, or the Letter-writer's Objections, will fall un-BA der

der Observation in the Course of my Argument: But some Peculiarities in the former, I beg leave to take Notice of here.

If. I cannot help observing an Acrimony of Spirit in his Treatment of me, very different from what he expresses and prescribes towards the profess'd Adversaries of the Christian Religion. I can imagine but one probable Account of this manifest Distinction, which I shall take the Liberty to fuggest. I am neither furpriz'd nor afflicted to find my felf under the Displeasure of a Person of his warm Complection, and strong Aversion from the Establishment: Whoever defends the Church as a Society sublisting upon Principles of Ecclefiastical Union, or afferts the Rights of its civil Establishment, will be fure of the fiercest Resentments from Men of this Character, whom nothing will please but a Concurrence in fome Scheme or other of Subversion. And when we remember how largely the Unbelievers have contributed their Quotas to this Service, what Aids have been brought

brought into it by the Rights of the Church, Independent Whig, Journals, and other Performances from that Quarter, we cannot wonder that old Allies shou'd consider them as Friends, fpeak of them with Tenderness, and Regret, a that by too hafty a Confession of their Faith, which they had better have kept in, they shou'd disqualify themselves for farther Service. They have mightily help'd to fill up the common Cry of Popery and Priestcrast, but this useful Clamour is much discredited by the plain Discovery now made, that by Popery these Gentlemen have all along meant Christianity, model has person of the

Falsifications in his Animadversions on me. For publick Wisdom he substitutes publick Conscience, a Term I never once used, and a thing of which I can form no Idea. Conscience is a private personal Principle, submitted only to

Reflections on the Conduct &c. p. 88.

Pref. to Reflections &c. p. 24, 25, 26, 27, &c.

fome Law of God, real or supposed, as its ultimate Rule. A Man indeed may be directed and inform'd in Inquiries of Conscience, and may in some Cases be oblig'd to rest on the Affirmation of fome other Person, as the best Information he is capable of; but no more on the Magistrate's, than any other Man's; and on no mortal Man's, in Contradiction to his own Convictions. But to publick Wildom, every Man as a Member of Society is bound to submit his own, in all Provisions for the Welfare of the Body: And he who cannot distinguish between fubmitting his Wisdom to the Wisdom of the Magistrate, and submitting his Conscience to the Conscience of the Magistrate, is not fit to consider this Subject.

In my Preface, Pag. 62. I say — strictly speaking, the Liberty of private Judgment cannot be taken away or restrain'd; but an UNBOUNDED Liberty of publishing that Judgment, can be challeng'd from no Claim of Nature, no Rule of the Gospel; nor reconciled to the Order, or even the Being of a Society, founded

ded on a certain System of Doctrines and Rules, as the Christian Church is. The Affertion manifestly regards the Christian Church as a Society, and was offered to the Consideration of the ingenious Persons just before mention'd, and whom the Writer I opposed had cited as Authorities in full Agreement with him; who being Christians, I presumed cou'd not in the Passages referr'd to mean to go the lengths of that Author, and affert Religion to be so merely a personal Matter as he had done, because this was inconsistent with the Being of a Christian Church as a Society. And therefore all this Gentleman's Questions and Observations a How comes a civil Society and the Christian Church to be the same thing? - These were civil Societies before Christ was heard of - &c. are utterly foreign and impertinent. But what I would chiefly offer to the Correction of the Reader, is his Falfification in changing Unboun-DED LIBERTY into b A LIBERTY of publishing &c. And then he cries out,

Pref. to Reflections &c. p. 27. b Ibid.

he is a asham'd and forry that a Christian Writer Shou'd affert such a Proposition. &c. Let him restore the Term he has dropp'd, and I am not, nor ever shall be, asham'd of the Assertion, but think it a very great and important Truth. For if the Christian Church as a Society be founded on a certain System of Doctrines and Rules. then these Doctrines and Rules are fundamental to that Society, fundamental Terms and Conditions of Union between the Members of it: So that he who publickly denies these Doctrines, and opposes these Rules, breaks the fundamental Conditions of Union, and does what in him lies to dissolve the Society. Now an UN-BOUNDED Liberty to publish ALL private Judgment or Opinion in Points of Religion, includes a Liberty publickly to deny these Doctrines and oppose these Rules, and confequently to subvert the Roundations of the Society. The Union of the Society confifts in an Agreement and Stipulation of the Members publickly to profess these Doctrines, and ob-

ferve these Rules, and consequently in a Restraint from publickly opposing them: Take away this Restraint, and the Union ceases, the Society is dissolved. A Liberty of publishing different Judgments in Points of less Importance to the Order or Being of the Society, may be and is allow'd more or less in all Christian Churches; tho' I acknowledge 'tis unreasonably abridg'd in some: But an Unbounded Liberty of this Kind, is inconfiftent with the Being of any Church, upon whatever Plan or Scheme of Polity it is form'd. Neither can any Society Civil or Religious fubfift, or be even conceiv'd in Idea. confistently with an Unbounded Liberty in all the Members publickly to oppose those Conclusions, which are the Fundamental Rules and Conditions of its Union. The Term this Gentleman has dropp'd in reciting me, is of the utmost Importance to the Subject: The Truth of almost every Conclusion, concerning either Liberty or Authority, depends on its being stated under its proper Limitations: The Measure of these Limitations is fixed, partly by the general Principles of 114 Social

Social Union, and more particularly in the feveral Species of Societies, by the Nature, Constitution, and Stipulations of each. What I affirm'd in my Preface, of the Authority and Obligations of a civil Establishment of Religion, is so far as I can perceive within the just Boundaries of the Subject. To have added the proper Restrictions to each Proposition fo explicitly, as to have prevented all Mistakes of weak, or Perversions of malicious Men, wou'd far have exceeded the Bounds of a Preface, which is complain'd of as too a Tedious already. As they arise from the Nature of the Subject, I might prefume any unprejudiced Understanding. with ordinary Attention, would eafily fupply them: Especially when I had guarded against any Imputation of carrying Authority into Extremes, by full and clear Declarations for all Liberty that can consist with Society. I hope to shew my Affertions of each perfectly reconcileable; but whether I do or not, I cannot in Juflice be charg'd with Conclusions which I explicitly renounced.

Mr. C. Pref. p. 4. And b Onlin value little dute

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In the Profecution of this Subject, I may fometimes have Occasion to call on Mr. Chandler again, and shall take leave of him at present, with an humble Offer of my Advice to him in some few Particulars.

1ft. THAT he wou'd do himself the Justice to consider the Christian Church as a Society, and the Christian Religion as a focial Institution, as well as a perfonal Matter. When that Subject was before me, I endeavour'd to do it Justice in both these_Views; and was as careful to affert that primary and immediate Relation of every Christian to Christ, with respect to which his Religion is a personal Matter, as to affert his Relation to the outward Ecclesiastical Society, with respect to which his Religion is also a focial Matter. But if what I have offer'd on that Subject. be too contemptible for his Notice, I wou'd refer him to Mr. Hooker, or Bishop Stilling fleet's Irenicum, especially the first Part, where he will find the general

neral Principles of Ecclesiaftical Union very clearly afferted, and in a perfect Confistency with all the Liberty of acting according to private Judgment, that can be claim'd by the Members of fuch a Society. If He had true Principles before him, he has an Understanding very well able to trace them down to their proper Conclusions; but while he sets out upon wrong Principles, the farther he pursues his Deductions, the farther he will be from Truth. I heartily thank him for his Labours in the Service of Christianity; but I fear if while he defends the Christian Religion, he maintains Doctrines subversive of the Christian Church, what he builds with one Hand, he will pull down with the other,

219. WITH respect to the Civil Establishment of Religion, I wou'd recommend to his attentive Consideration these Two Principles—That Religion is necessary to secure the moral and political Ends of Society—And, That all overt Actions of what Kind soever, so far as they are attended with Civil Consequen-

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ces on the Peace &c. of Society, must be under the Cognisance and Regulation of Civil Power: I presume I have affirm'd nothing on this Subject, but what arises by just Inference from these Principles.

3/y. I wou'd persuade him to more Attention and more Justice; and if He is pleas'd to add a little Modesty and Manners, it will be no Disadvantage to him in Controversy. If he desires to convince any Person whom he thinks fit to oppose, he shou'd rather argue than rail. And if he has any Adversary who wou'd be pleas'd to see him expose himself, He wou'd wish him to write just as he has done in his Reslections on me.

THE Gentleman who has favour'd me with his Correspondence by Letter, has given me the same Occasion to complain of unfair Representations; of imputing to me Positions, which I cannot in any equitable Construction be understood to affirm, and which I have expresly renounced. He has kept indeed pretty

clear from those mean Scurrilities on my Person and Character, to which Mr. Chandler has descended; and contents himself with charging my Assertions with 2 Hobbism, or Popery, with being b false, wicked, inhuman, irreligious, inconsistent with the Peace of Society, and injurious to the Author of Literal Scheme consider'd, &c. I shall endeavour to do my felf and him Justice in the following Pages. In the mean Time I beg Leave to observe, ift. That I have never afferted to the Magistrate a Right to beat any one into the Religion He establishes, or compel them by Force to profess it, but only to reftrain such publick Oppofition to it, as I think inconfistent with the Nature and Ends of Society. 2ly. That I have never wrote one Syllable against a Toleration of other Professions of Religion, together with that established, and therefore his long invidious Declamations on these Topicks, which make the Substance of his Letter, are groundless and impertinent. My Cen-

² Lett. p. 1. 49. b Pag. 3.

fures in that Part of my Preface which has raised this Clamour upon me, are expresly directed against the SCHEME of LIBERTY, which the Author whom he defends, advances in his 13th Chapter, and propofes as a the True and only Scheme, by which the World ought to be regulated-The Terms of it are-That the Magistrate ought to b inforce nothing by Civil Sanctions, but the Law of Nature. That Religion shou'd be left a c Matter Purely Personal. d That universal Liberty shou'd be establish'd in respect to all Opinions and Practices—He adds indeed—not prejudicial to the Peace and Welfare of Society; a Limitation, which in my Apprehension, will overthrow his whole Scheme. Now this Scheme I oppose, as manifestly inconfistent with the Civil Establishment of any particular Religion, fubversive of Piety, Virtue, Order, and Peace. The Publication of it by a private Man, I think an Infult on the effablish'd Church, and justly censurable by

^{*} Lit. Sch. p. 413. b p. 414. c p. 416. d p. 413.

flections on it, which might be fufficiently fupported by an Appeal to our Laws and Constitution. But because I think the Foundation, Nature, Rights, and Essects of a Civil Establishment of Religion, a Subject of great Importance to the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, I am willing, with God's Assistance to my mean Abilities, to enter into a distinct Consideration of it.



CHAP.



CHAP. I.

THAT Religion, or a certain Scheme and Profession of Religion, may justly be established by Civil Power:



HE general Consent of Mankind in any one Conclusion, tho' it be not in Strictness a Proof of Truth or Justice, yet it is a fair Presumption of it. In all

Account past or present, we find some establish'd Religion. Hence I take Leave to conclude, That the wifest Men in all Ages (for such the Founders and Governours of Societies may equitably be presented.)

fumed) have judg'd it their Right and Duty to establish some Religion, and that the Peace and Interests of Society required that some should be establish'd. All the Disputes and Contentions which have happen'd on this Subject, have related to the Choice of the Religion: But in this Conclusion, that some should be establish'd, the Wisdom of all Ages and Countries has concurr'd; and this Concurrence I insist on, as a full Reply to all those Authorities of private Writers. which are or can be cited, as favouring a contrary Judgment. 'Tis indeed furprizing, that Persons who represent Authority as fo improper a Ground of Affent, should use almost no other Argument, even while they are opposing it. But thus we find the Author of Grounds and Reasons, the Literal Scheme consider'd, and the Letter Writer, pouring forth their Collections of Passages from private Writers on this Subject fo liberally, that if these were taken away, all that they have offer'd on this Queftion, would shrink into a very narrow Compass. To each of these Authorities,

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it were easy to answer particularly, by fhewing that they are either misapplied, or extended beyond the Meaning, and contrary to the stated judgment of the Author. But I think the Examination of them not worth the While, and of very little Moment in the present Question. For suppose them as fully agreed in Judgment with the Gentlemen, who alledge them, as they themselves can desire, Will they put their Opinion in the Ballance against the united Judgment of all Legislators in all Ages of the World? The Laws and Constitutions of our own Country, in which fome Religion or other has always been establish'd, are a better Authority in this Question, than the Judgment of any private Writers; but much more when supported with the unanimous Confent of publick Wifdom in all Times, all Countries, under all the various Kinds of Government in the World. What a poor Figure do these Gentlemen make, with the few wrested and tortured Evidences which they have press'd into their Service, against so venerable an Authority as this? It were .oroled C 4 eafy side of the Question, but when the united Wisdom of all publick Constitutions in all Ages has declared for it, it has surely all the Weight that the Authority of any human Judgment can give it; and therefore if the Question were to be decided by Authority, it might fairly be left here. If I can deduce my Conclusion from true Principles, and prove it agreeable to Reason and Justice, it will neither want the Support, nor fear the Censure of any Authority. I shall therefore endeavour to shew,

If, THAT the Nature and Ends of Civil Society require the Establishment of some Religion.

2dly, THAT there is nothing in the Nature of Religion, inconfishent with such Establishment.

We cannot, I think, conceive a Number of Men united in Society, without a Submission of each Individual to some Restraints, which he was not under before.

before. For their Union in one Body can no otherwise appear, than by their acting under the same Rule; so far as that Rule extends, their Actions are limited, their Liberty restrain'd. The Number and Subject of these Rules and Restrictions will be various, according to the various Kinds and Intentions of Societies enter'd into by Men. Where the Society is form'd under the Obligation of prior Laws, and in Submission to a fuperior Authority, fo far as the Prescriptions of those prior Laws, and that fuperior Authority reach, the Rules of that Society are limited and confin'd as to their Matter and Extent; and whatever farther Power of Legislation that Society has in it felf, is under a Restraint from enacting any Thing contrary to that prior Direction. The Question then on this Head is, whether Religion be not a proper Subject of these social Rules. either prescrib'd to Mankind by a superior Authority, or fuch as the Conclusions of their own Reason would suggest to them. Out of Principles and a Party world brabaan Linew words to that office

THE Hypothesis which derives Civil Society from the immediate Appointment and Institution of God, supposes also a Religion at the fame time prescribed by him, with an Injunction on the Fathers and Governours of the Society, to direct and promote the Observance of that Religion: Of this Hypothesis the Establish. ment of Religion is a part. But I prefume the Gentlemen I am concern'd with. rather choose the other Hypothesis, which derives Civil Society from the voluntary Combinations of Men equal in all Pretensions, and undetermin'd by a prior Rule. The Laws and Terms of Union in fuch Society, depend intirely on the Agreement and Stipulations of the Members; and we will only presume them reasonable Men, confulting the Peace, Strength, and Virtue of the Community: But I hope their Character as rational Agents, will allow us also to suppose they acknowledge a God, and are concern'd for his Honour. Let us fee then how the Question will stand upon this Hypothesis, and whether these Principles and a Regard to these Ends of Society, would not lead

them to the Establishment of some Religion.

A a small Writer, who has bestow'd his Censures on me, takes upon him Magisterially to affirm, that in all Original Contracts Religion was a Matter specially reserv'd and exempted from all Direction of Civil Authority; whence it must follow, that in all Communities where any Religion is establish'd, the Governours have broke the Original Contract; a Do-Etrine which will carry Consequences not very favourable to any Civil Authority. now fubfiffing in the World. I doubt my Curiofity will never be gratify'd with a Sight of one of these original Contracts. but till they are produced, such a Claim of Reserve will be but poorly supported by a bare Affertion. In the mean Time

I shall take leave to conclude from universal Fact, and the Establishment of some Religion in all Nations, of whom we have any Knowledge or Tradition, that there was no fuch Referve in the original

a British Journal Mar. 1726.

Contracts of any; neither can any Reafon be imagin'd why there should be:

FOR suppose these Contracters to have no other Views of Religion, than what arose from the Collections of their own Reason; This Reason wou'd tell them, at least such among them as cou'd make any tolerable Use of it, that without Religion their Society wou'd want its strongest Cement, and all focial Virtues their ftrongest Obligation. Those to whom the Authority and Government of the Society shou'd be committed, cou'd not but perceive what Advantage it wou'd be. in the Discharge of their Office; to be affur'd of the Duty and Fidelity of their Subjects, from Principles of Conscience, and an Apprehension of God's Displeasure. And what cou'd be more defireable to the Subjects, than that their Governours. who had no Superior on Earth, shou'd acknowledge one in Heav'n; and be restrain'd from any injurious Abuse of their Power, by the Dread of a Being. whom no Cunning could elude, no Power relist? To every Man Reason wou'd suggeft.

gest, that nothing cou'd so effectually promote among Men that mutual Trust, and Confidence in each other's Justice and Veracity, which the Ends of Society require, as a Prefumption that each acted under the Awe of a supreme being. But how shall this Prefumption be supported? By what outward Evidences cou'd Men assure each other, that they believ'd and feared an Almighty Omniscient Judge, the Avenger of all Injustice and Falsehood? I know none but an open Profession and Observance of fome Religion. He who publickly worship'd the Deity, might be prefumed to believe and fear him: But he who worship'd none, wou'd appear to believe none: And if there be no publick Worship in a Society, there must be all the Appearance that can be imagined of absolute Irreligion. If then it be necessary to the Ends of Society, that Men shou'd have a reasonable Prefumption of each other, that they believed and fear'd a God, some publick Worship must be equally necessary, as the only reasonable Evidence and Ground for fuch Prefumption. To these Consideraderations I may also add, that to Men believing a God, and the Dependence of human Affairs on his Providence, publick and focial Worship wou'd appear equally reasonable, to engage or acknowledge his Favours, and avert his Judgments from the Society, as the private Applications of each individual are, with respect to his own personal Wants and Bleffings. From these Views natural Reason might justly conclude, that publick Worship, both as an Evidence and Duty of Religion, was of great Importance to the Happiness of the Society, and every Member of it. But publick Worship, in the Nature of the Thing, requires an Agreement of Men in some Scheme of Religion, some Rules for its Direction, and some Provisions for its Support: And therefore the same Reason which fuggested the Necessity or Expediency of publick Worship, wou'd also fuggest the Necessity or Expediency of fuch Rules and Provisions; and whatever Scheme of publick Worship was thus directed and supported, wou'd be in other Words an establish'd Religion. All the

the difficulty wou'd be to bring Men, under the Suppositions of this State, to such an Agreement in some outward Scheme of Religion, as might render publick Worship and an Establishment practicable; for natural Reason being here in the Dark, and without any determinate Rule, wou'd probably produce an infinite Variety of opposite Judgments.

But I desire it may be remember'd, that the State here suppos'd for Argument is merely imaginary. I presume there never was any such Assembly of Men, consulting a social Union, without a previous Engagement to some real, or believ'd Revelation. And 'tis sufficient to my Argument on the present Supposition, if Principles of natural Reason might lead Men by just Inference to conclude the Importance of Religion, and publick Worship to the Ends of Society; and to wish some Expedient might be found, to render it practicable.

To Men so disposed, if those of most Esteem for Wisdom among them proposed

fed a Scheme, free from any great Objections, it might reasonably appear better for the Society to receive even this, tho? not perfectly agreeable to every one's Sentiments, than to be left in a State of publick Irreligion. That indeed wou'd be wanting, which alone cou'd fatisfy the Conscience in the Service recommended. and reconcile the various Apprehensions of Men in a chearful Submission to it, an Affurance of the Divine Approbation. Nothing cou'd be more desirable to Men in fuch a State, than that God wou'd communicate his Will; fuch a Direction wou'd reach the Conscience, overrule every Man's private Opinion, and perfectly answer all the Ends and Purposes of Religion with respect to Society: And therefore if fuch a Religion was proposed, with fatisfactory Evidence of a divine Approbation, both Conscience and Prudence wou'd persuade them to direct and support the Observance of it. I appeal to common Sense, whether Men in fuch Circumstances may not reasonably be supposed thus to argue and act. But furely 'tis most absurd to imagine, that they

they shou'd stipulate against the Establishment of any Religion, even such as God shou'd direct; and preclude themselves from those Advantages, which Religion only can derive on Society, and for which human Wisdom can devise no Equivalent.

But let us bring the Hypothesis to a State more agreeable to Fact, and suppose these Contracters to have previously receiv'd some Religion as revealed by God. If the same Revelation were generally acknowledg'd by them; all the Arguments which in the Views of mere Reason recommended the Establishment of some Religion, wou'd appear enforc'd by a divine Command, and determin'd in their Application to This.

But suppose them divided by different and opposite Persuasions of Revelation: In this Case, all the Questions we can imagine to atise on this Subject, are whether any Religion shou'd be establish'd, what that shou'd be, and what Provision shou'd be made for those of other

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Perfuafions: Which in fuch an Affembly must all necessarily be determin'd by a Majority of Votes. Suppose then a Majority to be persuaded of the Truth and divine Authority of some one Religion, this Perfusion it felf must decide the two first Questions. For as I have said, to Men fo perfuaded publick Worship. and a due Provision for it, wou'd not only appear adviseable from Reasons regarding the Interests of Society, but a-Duty enjoin'd by God, with a particular Defignation of the Scheme directed by him. The third Question indeed wou'd admit more Debate, and require an Attention to various Considerations, both Civil and Religious. In confulting whether the approv'd Religion shou'd be establish'd exclusive of all others, it wou'd be consider'd in Civil Prudence. whether the Parties and Factions which fuch Divisions in Religion might probably occasion, wou'd not weaken and endanger the Society, more than the Accession of Numbers wou'd strengthen it. If a Religion taught Principles inconfiftent with Civil Obedience, and that SubSubmission to Authority, which the Ends of Society require, this would be a just Reason to exclude that Religion. Or if its Doctrines or Worship were immoral, or blasphemous; neither Conscience towards God, nor a Regard to the Peace and Virtue of the Society, wou'd allow a Toleration of it. But whether they shou'd admit any Toleration, or under what Limitations or Restrictions they shou'd admit it, these and all other Questions on this Subject, must in the Event be decided by the Majority, whose ultimate Rule cou'd be no other than the Conclusions of their own Prudence, or the Convictions of their Conscience. As in some Circumstances there might be just, reasonable, and religious Motives for a Toleration; fo in others, there might be equal Reasons against it; but to this Majority acknowledging a Divine Revelation, and already united in a Worship prescrib'd by it, no imaginable Reafons cou'd fuggest or recommend the Expedient now contended for, of leaving Religion a Matter purely personal. Whether with or without a Toleration dence

of others, they wou'd certainly resolve, that the publick Encouragement and Support of that Religion, deserv'd their first, and always their chief Care.

I observe only farther, that whatever Resolution this Majority came to in the State supposed, they cou'd not injure the minor or diffentient Part, unless they attempted to oblige their Submission by Force: This indeed they cou'd have no Right to do: But the Terms of Affociation must in the Nature of the Thing depend on the Conclusions of this Majority. And if those who differted in Judgment from them, could not reconcile themselves to these Terms, nothing wou'd be taken from them, but they wou'd be just where they were before; and all the Confequence of their Diffention wou'd be, that the Society wou'd be more contracted, and confift of fewer Persons than if all had agreed.

In fum then, under whatever Hypothesis we suppose Men entering into Society, there appear no Reasons of Prudence

dence or Justice which shou'd diffuade or forbid the Establishment of some Religion: On the contrary, the same Reafons that prove Religion in general neceffary to the Ends of Society, will also conclude for the Establishment of some particular Religion. For Religion in general is not capable of a publick Provision by Laws, which can direct only fpecial Actions, Professions of Doctrine, Modes of Worship, &c. Leaving Men to Religion in general, is, as to any Provision of Law, leaving them to no Religion at all. If therefore the Ends of Society require some Provision for Religion in it, the Nature of the Thing requires that Provision to be particular. Whether these Provisions shou'd be extended to one or more particular Schemes, whether with equal or fubordinate Encouragements, must, as all other Questions relating to this Subject, depend on publick Resolutions: In the forming a Society, on the Agreement and Stipulations of the Members; and in all Successions of it, on the Resolutions of publick Authority, in whatever Hands that D 3 is

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is lodg'd. And whoever is at any Time afterwards admitted into the Society, comes in under the Obligation of a Contract, explicit or prefum'd, to fubmit to the Laws, Conflitutions, and Authority of it. I have chose to consider this Question in those Lights, in which it may be supposed to appear to Men entring into Society, because human Reason may be prefumed here to act with its utmost Freedom of Judgment; and the Conclufions of that State will have the explicit Approbation of more Individuals, than can confistently with the Order of Society be afterwards confulted. And if the Establishment of some Religion be a just, reasonable, and necessary Provision for focial Happiness, in laying the Foundations of a Community; it will ever be just, reasonable, and necessary, while any Societies remain in the World. But

2/y, THE common Track of Disputation on this Subject, has run upon Objections from the Nature of Religion. It is argued, "That Religion is an internal Principle, not subject to human "Inspec"Inspection, nor to be controul'd by human Authority. That with respect " to Faith, every Man must believe ac-" cording to his own Convictions --" That no commands of Civil Authori-"ty, can make him believe what he " does not believe, or fatisfy him that " an Action is agreeable to the Divine " Will, which in the Refult of his own " Judgment appears contrary to it -" That human Reason in these Acts is " fubject only to God, and that this " Submission is properly every Man's " Religion-And therefore, that Re-" ligion is a Subject exempt from Civil " Authority, and consequently incapa-" ble of being directed and prescrib'd by " a Civil Establishment." Now the Premisses in this Argument are very true, but the Misfortune is they are nothing to the Purpose. For first, That Religion as it fignifies internal Acts of the Mind, Faith, Devotion, Reverence, and Love of God, and Submission to his Will, &c. is a Matter purely personal, transacted immediately and only between God and the Soul, I readily agree, and D 4 have

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have on all Occasions very fully afferted. But so also are Justice, Temperance, Charity, and other moral Virtues; these in their proper Notion are Acts, Habits, and Dispositions of the Mind, and as fuch no more subject to human Authority, than the internal Acts of Religion. But then those outward Actions, which are presumptive Evidences of such inward Dispositions of Mind, are under human Cognisance, and proper Subjects of human Laws. It is certainly to be wish'd that in every Society, all the Members had these internal Dispositions, had Principles of Justice, Charity, &c. and, as the furest Foundation of these Virtues, that they believ'd and fear'd a supreme Being, the Judge of their Actions, and the Disposer of their Happiness. But as these internal Principles and Dispositions. can by no other moral Means be infused into them, than by Arguments, Persuafion, and Convictions of their Judgment; all that Civil Power can do with regard to them, is making Provisions for Education and Instruction, appointing fit Persons to those Offices, and requiring

a due discharge of them. But then I fay, the outward Actions expressive of these Dispositions, are within the Reach and Inspection of Civil Authority. and a proper Matter of focial Laws. These outward Actions have obtain'd the Name of those inward Principles and Dispositions, from which they are prefumed to flow. So Acts of Justice or Charity, are called by the Name of those Virtues: Acts of Worship, and Protessions of Faith, &c. Religion. In this Sense the Word is always used, when we speak of particular Religions, as the Christian, Mahometan, &c. The Idea is composed of their Professions of Faith. Modes of Worship, &c. Such outward Acts as are apparent to Men. And in this Sense it is, that we affirm Religion to be a proper Subject of human Laws. and not as it is an internal invisible Principle, a Thought cognisable only by God. And therefore Mr. Fenelon's Argument, which my Correspondent has prefix'd to his Letter, that because b Liberty

The Intention of Mr. F. to the Service of the Church of Rome, in this Way of reasoning, is obvious enough to any

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berty of Thought is an impregnable Fortrefs, which no human Power can force; therefore Kings Shou'd not take upon them to direct in Matters of Religionis weak and inconclusive; because the Matters of Religion, in which we affert a Right in Kings to take upon them to direct, are only outward Actions. And if the Necessity of moral Virtue to the Ends of Society, are a just Reason for the Magistrate to direct and prescribe fuch outward Actions, as are prefumptive Evidences of it; fince Religion is equally necessary to those Ends, necessary to give a due Effect and Influence to all Laws of the Community, and to affert the Obligation of moral Virtue it felf, the same Reasons will justify him in directing and prescribing such Actions.

considering Man. For if this be admitted, as a Principle that no Authority but what extends to Thoughts, can direct in Matters of Religion; as Civil Power is excluded from this Province, it wou'd fall to that Church which claims Infallibility; a Character which when allow'd, gives it Power over Thoughts, as well as Actions.

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as are prefumptive Evidences of that Principle.

WELL; but Secondly, the Objection goes farther and fuggests, "That if the " Magistrate be allowed to direct by what outward Actions I shall evidence " my Religion, a Power will hereby be given him of requiring Actions from me, contrary to the Convictions of my " Conscience, and Persuasions of Duty: But this Consequence I deny; and anfwer, That a Power or Right (which here mean the same Thing) in the Magiftrate to direct and prescribe such Actions as he approves, as Conditions of his Favour, does not imply a Right to force and compel an active Compliance with such Prescription. He may direct and encourage some particular Scheme of Religion, and thereby establish it, and yet not compel any one to profess it. There is also a wide Difference between a Man's being compell'd to act according to the Magistrate's Persuasion, and being restrain'd from acting according to his own; and the one may be just and reafonable,

fonable, when the other is not fo. The Medium between these Points will be observ'd, when I come to treat the Nature and Extent of a Civil Establishment of Religion: And I hope all the Difficulties of this Objection will be reliev'd. No Doubt all Powers committed to weak and fallible Men, may in the Execution of them be extended beyond the proper Boundaries of Reason and Equity; and this Case may happen, and in Fact has often happen'd, in Matters of Religion. But I must observe, that the same Case may happen with respect to moral Virtue. A Magistrate (e.g.) may direct me to evidence my Justice, by an Action which in my Judgment and Conscience I think unjust; his Presumption can no more alter or influence my Judgment in one Case than the other; and if this Argument will exclude him from all Right of Direction in the one Cafe, it will equally exclude him from it in the other. He is allowed by the Author of literal Scheme considered, &c. to prescribe and even c inforce by civil Sancti-

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ons the Law of Nature. But this Scheme is liable to the same Inconveniences, exposed to the same Objections, with a Right to prescribe in Matters of Religion. He can no otherwise prescribe this Law of Nature, than by prescribing fuch Actions as are agreeable to it: Neither he nor his Subjects are infallible; and he may direct an Action which either, thro' his own Mistake, may be contrary to the Law of Nature, or thro' their Mistake may appear to be fo. He has no more Power over the Liberty of their private Judgment, than they have over his; and if he must be excluded from all Matters, in which his Directions may be contrary to the private Judgment or Conscience of the Subject, he must be excluded from this too. The Letter Writer indeed wou'd persuade us to find a great Difference between these Cases. He tells us, That d The Law of Nature or Reason is not a personal Matter, as mere Religion is - That no Man has any Concern in another's Religion, but he termes & isciples inconfiltent with the

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who professes it - That if there be any Fault in it, he is alone, and personally accountable to God for it: But the Law of Nature is a Matter wherein Society is deeply concern'd, &c. But in my Apprehension, every Man has the fame Liberty of collecting his own Law of Nature from his Reason, as of collecting his own Religion from his Reason. The System of the Law of Nature he thus collects, is as much a personal Matter, as the System of Religion he thus collects. As he is alone, and personally accountable to God, for any Error of his Judgment in the one Case, so he is alone, or personally accountable to God for the Errors of his Judgment in the other. But when he proceeds to act in Consequence of these Judgments, according to the Nature and Tendency of the Actions produced by them, both his Laws of Nature, and his Religion may become Social Matters, wherein the Society may be deeply concern'd. If under the Conviction of his Religion, he publickly maintains and teaches Principles inconsistent with the Peace of Society, I prefume his Religion will

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will be a Matter in which the Society will be concern'd. And if he lays down to himself a Law of Nature, in Consequence of which he neither disquiets nor injures any Body, how whimfical foever it may be, I suppose no body will much trouble themselves about it. His Law of Nature, and his Religion, fo far as I can perceive, are by the same Considerations render'd alike Personal or Social Matters; and the Characters by which this Gentleman wou'd distinguish them, are applicable to both. If it is e of the utmost Importance to us, that our Neighbours should be bonest, just, sober, and not be Thieves, Adulterers, Rebels, &c. It is of just the same Importance to us. that our Neighbours shou'd not publickly profess and teach a Religion, which allows Men to be dishonest, unjust, intemperate; to be Thieves, Adulterers, or Rebels, &c. If the f Magistrate has to do with every Man's Law of Nature, as it concerns the Peace of the Society; He has just as much to do with every Man's Religion,

And if the Magistrate, being the Person who is to make Laws for the Government of the Society, is unavoidably the
Judge what is the Law of Nature, so far
as to determine for the whole Body, what
is or is not injurious to Society; he has
the same Right to judge, what publick
Prosession of Religion is or is not injurious to Society, and is as regularly under
no Control but his own Reason, and has
the same Liberty of Conscience in one
Case as the other.

has well observed, is not to be expected in human Government, upon any Scheme that can be devised. Nay, tho' the Plan were drawn and prescribed by God himself, yet if Men were to execute it, Inconveniences wou'd arise in the Administration. But with all these Impersections, Civil Power is necessary to the World, and its Cognifance must be extended to all such Matters, as the Ends and Interests of Society

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require to be provided for. Religion is manifestly one of those Matters, and one of greatest Importance to the Happiness of Society; and fince all Provisions of Law must refer to specify'd Actions, the Provisions of Law for Religion, whether directive or reftrictive, must be particular. To whatever general Subject we extend human Laws, the particular Directions or Restraints on that Subject, the Nature of Society leaves to the Supreme Legislative Authority, in whatever Hands that is placed: And in the most popular Scheme that can be imagin'd, and where all the Provision is made for Liberty, that can confift with focial Union, to the Votes of the Majority. That the Exercife of this Authority is limited by general Rules of Reason and Equity, is most true; but the Application of these Rules. must be left to the Wisdom and Conscience of those entrusted with this Authority. Neither is it possible forto fix and bind them by any human Provision, but that they may err; because no Limitation can prevent these Mistakes, but what specifies the particular Actions to be prescribed : scribed; this must be done by the Discretion of some Authority or other, and whatever does it, is its self the supreme Legislature in that Community.

WHAT Rules, or Limitations, the Civil Magistrate ought in Reason and Conscience to set to himself in the Exercise of this Authority, with regard to Religion, is indeed the great Question on this Subject. But the Point I am at present concern'd for is, whether Civil Authority may reasonably and justly establish any particular Religion. And I hope the Affirmative will appear fairly deduced from this great Truth, that Religion, internal Religion, as it signifies a Belief, Reverence, and Love of an infinitely just, powerful, and omniscient Being, is a Principle the most effectual to promote and secure the Ends and Interests of Society. If this be acknowledg'd, it becomes a proper Care of Civil Authority to cultivate and promote this Principle. Civil Authority can do this no otherwife, than by Provisions for Education and Instruction, &c. and directing and encour-

encouraging such outward Actions, as are presumptive Evidences of this inward Principle. For all Provisions of human Laws, must refer to some particular outward Actions, and confequently all Provisions of Law for Religion, must point out some particular System, or Systems of outward Religious Actions, Declarations of Belief, Modes of Worship, &c. And whatever System of this kind is pointed out and encourag'd by Law, is the establish'd Religion of that Community. If therefore it be reasonable or necessary for Civil Authority, to make any Provision for Religion, it will be necessary for it to establish some Religion. And this Argument is supported by universal Fact, and approv'd by the Wisdom of all Legislators and Civil Governments, that are or have been known in the World.

But with Christians we may argue still farther, from the Authority of divine Revelation, which obliges us to acknowledge an Establishment of Religion in the Jewish State, by the special Appoint-

pointment of God himself. From which we are warranted to infer thus much, that a Civil Establishment of Religion is not in it self a moral Evil, for of such God could not be the Author. And I assure my felf all Christians will observe with me, that the Politions I oppose, viz. "That Religion ought to be left a " Matter purely personal, and that the " Establishment of any Religion under Civil Sanctions is unjust and unreasonable," do by direct and necessary Confequence impute Unrighteousness and Folly to the God whom we worship. And the' from the Jewish Establishment, which was accommodated to the particular State and Circumstances of that People, and fome special Views of Providence, we cannot infer that the particular Terms, Sanctions, and Measures of it are a Precedent obliging or directing other States in different Circumstances: Yet this we may with the utmost Certainty conclude from it, That all Establishments of Religion are not in their Nature moral Evils, unjust and unrighteous Constitutions; but on the contrary, that the Establishment of some Religion, is, in the Judgment of God himself, the wisest Provision for the Ends both of Society and Religion.

To the Members of this Protestant Church, in whose Ministry I have the Honour to serve, I may farther observe, that the Position that Religion ought to be left a Matter merely personal, and its immediate Consequence that Civil Authority has nothing to do-with it, are Doctrines which our Articles, Homilies, and whole Constitution, Civil and Ecclefiastical, renounce; which acknowledge the fame Authority in the Prince with Regard to Religion, which godly Kings and Princes in the Jewish State had: And that this is one of the Principal Doctrines by which we are diffinguish'd from those who adhere to the Church of Rome. Neither could the fubtilest Counsels of that Enemy, devise any Thing more effectually promotive of their Interests among us, than that we should dissolve our present Constitution, and admit in the Place of it the Scheme

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of Government now recommended to us, exclusive of all Regard to Religion. But this Reflection will come again in my Way, and be farther pursued.

I have endeavoured to shew, that Religion is not a Matter excluded by its Nature from the Care and Provisions of Civil Authority; on the contrary, that Reason directs, and the Ends of Society advise and require some religious Establishment. I go on then, and enquire farther.

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CHAP. II. SECT. 1.

On whose Judgment the Choice of the Religion to be established depends, upon what Motives, Consultation, and Advice that Question may reasonably be determined.

OW the religious Considerations may be among the Motives to an Establishment of some Religion, yet the Act it

felf is purely civil, and therefore must be determin'd by the Judgment of the supreme civil Magistrate; (i. e.) that Person, or those Persons, whether one or many, with whom the Legislative Power is lodg'd in any Community. To this Magistrate it must be left to choose what Religion he should establish, and what Measures of Favour, &c. that Establishment should carry with it. And his Resolutions can arise only from the Confolutions can arise only from the Confolutions

victions of his own Conscience, and the Conclusions of his own Wisdom, form'd upon such Lights as are before him, with such Information and Advice as he may reasonably take with him.

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A State of Nature, where Men have no other Views of Religion, but what may arise to each from the mere Collections of his Reason, undirected by any Revelation, and under which we may in Hypothesis imagine this Question to be considered, is in Truth only a speculative Fiction, which I presume never had any real Existence. But whether it had or not, the present State of Things in the World is very different, and Mankind are actually form'd into religious Societies, under various Persuasions of Divine Revelation, and confequently the Choice of the Magistrate is in Effect confin'd to some or other of these religious Societies. And the only Reasons which can be imagin'd to determine his Choice, are his Convictions of the Truth of a Religion profess'd by some of these Societies, the Acceptableness of their Worfhip

Thip to God, together with the Tendency of their Doctrines and Worship to promote internal Religion, and the Virtue and Peace of the Community. To which we may add, a Confistency or Coincidence of their Frame of Polity, with that of the Civil Constitution. A Conviction that the Religion profes'd by any of these Societies was reveal'd by God, and that their Worship and Polity was appointed, or is especially approved by him, must have a Weight with him fuperior to any other Confiderations. In examining the Pretenfions of each to these Pleas, the Magistrate must be allow'd the same Liberty of Inquiry. to proceed with the same Care and Attention, the same Advice and Consultation, that any other reasonable Man wou'd use in choosing his Religion. But as 'tis abfurd in any Man, to keep a Question of this Importance always in Debate, 'tis much more so in the Magistrate; because as I have shewn, the Establishment of some Religion is necessary to the Happiness of the Community; and fince the Establishment depends on his Choice, fo long as he

he keeps this Question undetermin'd. fo long the Community must want one of its best Provisions for Happiness: A Consideration which ought to persuade him to fix fomewhere, with all the Dispatch that can confift with a rational and attentive Search. Neither is it necessary to a rational Determination, that he shou'd examine all the Pretentions or Professions of Religion in the World: This would be an endless and a fruitless Labour. If upon a ferious Examination, the First that is offer'd him appears free from any fuch internal Objection to its Doctrines and Worship, as may oblige him to reject it, and the Attestation of God to it is proved by as good Evidence, as cou'd in Equity be expected or required; He may fafely rest here, and proceed to act according to his Conviction. And where the Pretenfions of feveral religious Societies appear equal in these Respects, deriv'd from the fame Revelation, and equally agreeable to it, and diffinguish'd only by fome Circumstances, not essential to the Religion they profess, he may reasonably determine his Choice, from Considerations of Prudence regarding the civil Peace, and Interests of the Community; and give the Advantage of Preference and Establishment, as these Considerations shall advise.

THE Magistrate indeed is fallible, and therefore tho' he may reasonably establish the Religion, which upon fuch Conviction of Truth, and fuch Considerations of Prudence he approves; yet he ought not absolutely to preclude himself from all further Information or Inquiry. He has the fame Right to repeal an Establishment. that he had to enact it: and the same Motives may as reasonably induce him to do one, as the other. If any Doubts or Scruples arise in his own Mind, concerning the Truth of the Religion he has chosen, a Revisal of the Question with the fame Attention and Confultation will he as reasonable, as it was in the first Consideration of it: But if he has no Scruples, he is under no Obligation to feek for them. And if any impertinent Disputant will be offering them to him, he has the same Reason to refuse to hear him, as he had to difmifs

dismiss the Inquiry upon his first Satisfaction in it. If any Man comes indeed with a Profession of being sent by God, with a Command from him to preach another Religion to him and his People, it will be reasonable to attend to him, and examine his Pretensions. But most unreasonable, even in this Case, immediately to revoke the Establishment, and suspend all the Laws that enact it; because upon these Terms, no Establishment could last a Day, and must be held at the mere Pleasure of every Enthusiast, or Impostor. But he who offers no other Religion in the Place of that approv'd, but only persuades the Magistrate that neither that nor any other Religion ought to be established, has no Right to be attended to, whatever Authority he may pretend to come with. God can never be imagin'd to fend any Man on fo ridiculous a Message; and all human Authority, that deserves any regard in this Queftion, has fully declared against it: And to restrain private Subjects from publishing fuch Schemes and Overtures, is a very gentle Correction of an Attempt, fo pernitions

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nitious in its Tendency to human Society.

IF it be inquir'd, what Advice the Magistrate shou'd in Prudence or Duty take with him in these Consultations, the Answer will arise from the Nature of the Questions in his Consideration. In debating the Truth of a Religion, either in an absolute Examination of one, or in a comparative Examination of feveral, it will be reasonable for him to require all Evidences from Facts, to be supported by credible Testimony; to try all Doctrines by the most attentive Application of his own Faculties, and in each of these Atticles to advise with any Persons, whose Fidelity he can rely on, and whose Capacity and Knowledge of the Subject may affift his Inquiries, and inform his Judgment; and resolve upon the whole, as his own Reason shall determine him. But 'tis most absurd to require him to sufpend his Resolution, till he has read every Book, heard every Argument and Objection pro and Con, that ever has been made, or can be made on the Subjects before - similar

fore him; and confulted every Man. who may possibly have fomething to fay about them. Upon these Terms he cou'd never come to any Resolution at all. When by an attentive Use of his own Faculties, and fuch Assistances as are within his present Reach, his Doubts and Difficulties are fatisfy'd, his Inquiry is fairly at an End, he has consider'd and confulted as far as any Reason can require him to do. And therefore it is a most impertinent Demand of the 2 Letter Writer. That before he will admit that Christianity was establish'd here or any where else upon due Consideration, I must prove that the civil Powers then in being, had before them in due Consideration, all the Discusfions that had been made, and all the Books that had been publish'd, for or against it. Common Sense will presume, that when they left those Religions, to which they were before prejudiced by Education, they acted upon Motives of Conscience, and ferious Persuasions of Truth. That the Priests and Teachers of their old

^{*} Pag. 7. 1 all add as the order of months and all and

Religions, wou'd not be filent on fuch an Occasion, but offer all they cou'd in Objection to Christianity, and in Support of their old Superstitions. That in fuch a Case, they themselves wou'd act with all Caution, take the best Advice and Affistance in their Power, and not renounce their former Prejudices, and hazard the Difaffection or Mutinies of their Subjects, by espousing a new Religion, but upon a deliberate Conviction of Truth and Duty. But it feems they were too hafty, and did not take half the Pains this Gentleman wou'd have prescribed to them. And I suppose if our Legislature wou'd comply with him, and revoke the prefent Establishment of Christianity, and take the Question anew into Debate, he wou'd fend them on the fame Errand, require them attentively to read and examine every Book and Argument, that has been wrote in Reproof or Defence of Christianity; and confult every Man, Jew, Turk, Infidel, or Heathen, who has, or fancies he has, any Thing to fay about it, before they shou'd presume to establish it again, And

And when he had found them this full Employment, for every Hour of their whole Lives, I doubt not but he wou'd in the mean Time supply their Place, and take care of the Government. But then he must give up what seems the great Delight of his Heart, everlasting Disputation about Religion; for he wou'd foon find these Engagements inconsistent with each other. But I will leave him to his Meditations on this admirable Scheme, and venture to suppose that when the Magistrate has with an attentive Use of his own Reason, and the best Advice and Assistance his prefent Circumstances admit, examin'd a Religion, and is fatisfy'd in the Truth and moral Excellency of it, He has acted with due Consideration, and may justly proceed to establish that Religion, or the Society professing that Religion He has fo approved.

In executing this Resolution, some Questions may arise to him, on which it will be reasonable for him more especially to consult those, who, by the Rules

of

of the Society professing that Religion, are appointed the Guides and Teachers of it. He is now supposed to be convinc'd of the Truth, and divine Authority of that Religion, and in Confequence of fuch Conviction to become a Member of the Society professing it. This Society, as a religious Corporation, is not alter'd in its Frame, Principles, or Terms of Union, by the Magistrate's Conversion or Admission into it. He becomes a Member upon the same Conditions, that other Members do. His Civil Character gives him not a different Station there, but he is equally with other Members under the Orders and Rules of the Society. And whatever Deference is due from others, to the appointed Guides and Teachers of it, is also due from him. The Christian Church for Instance sublisted as a religious Society, feveral Centuries before it receiv'd any Civil Establishment. When Constantine embrac'd that Religion, he became a Member of that Society, upon the same Terms that other Converts did: but nevertheless with just the same Civil Authority over his Subjects who were Mem-

Members of it, that he had before. His Right or Power to establish some Religion, was the fame as before, neither enlarg'd nor diminish'd by his becoming a Christian: but his Convictions now determin'd his Choice to that Religion. Suppose him then, or any other Magiftrate, refoly'd to establish that Religion, or, in other Words, the Christian Church in his Dominions professing that Religion. The Provisions of that Establishment, must be so particular as to distinguish that Society from all others, and therefore must descend to those Specialties, by which it is diffinguish'd; its Professions of Doctrine, Modes of Worship, &c. If indeed there is but one Christian Society in his Dominions, general Characters might diftinguish that from Jews, or Pagans. But even in that Case, as 'tis reasonable for him to be particularly inform'd in the Professions and Worship, in which he should personally concur; fo 'tis also reasonable for him to specify what He wou'd publickly support: Because the Rulers of that Society being fallible Men, might by subsequent Acts

Acts alter its Professions and Worship. and infert such Particulars as he could neither join in as a Christian, nor as a Magistrate encourage. But if there are many opposite Sects professing different Schemes of Christianity, it wou'd be more especially necessary to specify the Doctrines and Worship He designs to fayour. On all these Accounts then it wou'd be necessary for him, deliberately to resolve what Articles of Profession. what Administrations, Rules of Worlhip. or Polity He shou'd establish. As a Christian the primary Rule of his Choice wou'd certainly be what was expresly prescrib'd by Christ and his Apostles in the Scriptures, or had by constant Tradition from them obtain'd in the Church. If He is not able to fatisfy himself in these Inquiries, from his own Knowledge and Search, He must take the Affistance and Information of some Body or other. And I prefume both Prudence and Duty wou'd advise his Recourse to those, who are peculiarly set apart to the Study of that Religion, and are by an Institution of Christ appointed F 2 to

to be Guides and Teachers to that Society; and oblige him, cateris paribus, to prefer their Direction to any other Man's. The Magistrate in this case acts under the common Terms of Membership, with the same Liberty of private Judgment, and under the same Obligations of Submission to the Authority of the Society, that other Members have; with this Difference, that he confults not only how far as a Christian he may join in the Professions and Worship of that Society, but also as a Magistrate what He shou'd encourage and support. But both in these and all other Questions of Religion, I submit the Authority of the Guides and Pastors of the Church to his. and even the meanest Christian's own Perceptions of Truth. If they direct him contrary to his own Knowledge and Convictions of Christian Religion, their Advice or Judgment cannot over-rule his own, or be of any Authority with him; because no Authority can be of equal Weight with Evidence of the Thing. And if by any after Act, they shall alter the Professions or Worship of the Church, the

the Magistrate has the same Right and Liberty of Judgment on these Additions. as he had on the first Terms: And if in the Refult of his Judgment, these Additions appear fuch as he cannot with good Conscience comply with, He may both as a Christian withdraw his Communion, and as a Magistrate his Establishment from that Society. Neither can any Man's Stipulations as a Member of the Church, oblige his Submiffion beyond these Terms. For a Christian Church being in its proper Idea, a Number of Men combin'd together under a Contract, to profess the Doctrines and observe the Laws of Christ; which are therefore the primary Foundations of that Society, the Stipulations of every Member must be under the Reserve of a prior Obligation, to the Laws and Authority of Christ. An explicit Profesfion indeed of every Doctrine of Christ, as a Condition of Communion, being unreasonable and impracticable; it is necessary that some particular Doctrines shou'd be selected for this Rule; and fince Christ has not specially prescribed what F 3

what Doctrines, the Nature of Society leaves it to be determined by those, with whom the Authority of it is lodg'd. And fince Christ has appointed in this Society certain Persons distinguish'd by Order and Office, to be Guides and Teachers of others, it is a reasonable Duty of every Member to regard their Instructions, to confult them in all Doubts relating to his Religion, and where the Question is such that he must in the Event be determin'd by fome Man's Judgment or other, to prefer theirs. But wherever the Professions or Rules of the Society, or the Judgment of the appointed Guides in it are, or, which to him is all one, appear contrary to the Doctrines or Laws of Christ, they have no Authority as to him, and cannot be the proper Rule of his Judgment or Duty; but he is bound as a Subject of Christ not to comply with fuch Professions, or observe fuch Rules. Under these Reserves I have constantly limited ecclesiastical Authority, in all I have ever wrote on that Subject. Farther than this I have never taught any Deference to it from Magistrate strate or People, but in the most explicit Terms exempted every Man from it, so far as it contradicts his own deliberate Convictions of Truth or Duty.

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My Correspondent therefore may be pleas'd to observe, that the Authority I formerly afferted to Church, and now affert to the Magistrate, are very easily reconcil'd without making him a b Tool, or the People Slaves to the Clergy, as he would represent me to do: And that I allow both him and them to judge and act for themselves, without any more Submission to the Judgment of the Clergy, than common Prudence advises, the Nature of the Question concerning which they deliberate, the Nature of a religious Society, and the Ends of an Office of divine Appointment require. In Questions relating purely to the Religion the Magistrate has resolv'd to establish, it may be just and reasonable for him to confult with the Clergy, and within these Limitations to defer to their Judgment.

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But with what Measures of Favour the Church establish'd should be distinguish'd; by what Provisions the Establishment shou'd be adjusted to the Constitution, the Peace, and Interests of the Civil Society, and what Reserves a Regard for these Ends will advise to be made for other Religions, are Questions of political Consideration: In which I affert no more Authority to the Judgment of the Clergy, than to any other Man's: But if they are Men of Wisdom and Experience, they are as sit to be advised with as others of the same Character.

AND as the same Reasons, which affert to the Magistrate a Right to establish what Religion he approves, give him also a Right upon the same Motives to repeal or alter that Establishment; so he has the same Liberty of Inquiry and Consultation in one Case, as in the other, and has in both an equal Right to be determin'd by his own Convictions. And therefore supposing what my correspon-

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dent affirms. That the Alteration of the Establishment at our Reformation, was merely an Act of the State, without any Concurrence of the Clergy; yet this will be no just Objection to it, nor oblige me to retract any Thing I have ever affirm'd of the Authority of the Clergy in Matters of Religion. The Affertion of Fact indeed might eafily be disprov'd, but rather than divert into a Question foreign to the present Argument, I will admit it, and fee what Inferences will follow from it. Suppose then the Civil Magistrate at the Time of our Reformation, to be fully perfuaded that the Religion or Church then establish'd was greatly corrupted in Doctrine and Worship, and had departed from the Rules and Precepts of Christian Religion: I fay he had just the same Right to revoke the Establishment upon such Conviction. as he had before to establish it; and for the fame Reasons and Motives that he had favour'd that Religion with an Establishment, he might now grant that Favour to the Reform'd. The Establishment of any Religion is purely an Act of Civil Power, to which the Commit sion of the Clergy gives them no Claim. That every Member of a Christian Church consider'd merely as a religious Society, and the Magistrate as well as others is oblig'd in all Doubts and Que ffions of that Religion, to advise especially with the Clergy, and where they must in the Event be determin'd by some Authority or other, ceteris paribus, to prefer theirs, I have indeed affirm'd, and can see no Reason to recede from it. But an Obligation to Submit our own Convictions of Truth or Falshood, to the mere Authority of the Clergy, or any Mortal on Earth, I have never affirm'd, but most expresly disclaim'd. Suppose then the whole Clergy to have distented from the Magistrate, on the Points debated at the Time of our Reformation; if upon advising with them, he continu'd still clearly convinc'd in his own Perfualion, my Principles leave him at full Liberty to act according to it. One might wonder with what View this Gentleman introduces this invidious Remark on our Reformation,

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tion, but before I take Leave of him, I may find an Opportunity to give him my Conjectures of his Intention in it.

SECT. II.

Of the Nature and Import of a Civil Establishment of any Religion.

THE Magistrate is now supposed determin'd to establish the Religion of fome of those Societies, whose Pretensions have been under his Examination. When we attend to what we mean by the Religion of fuch Society fo establish'd, it appears to be that System of Doctrines, Worship, and Administrations, in the Profession and Use of which that religious Society was combin'd; together with the Orders of Polity, and Distinction of Offices obtaining in it. These are the visible Characters, from which the diffinguish'd Idea of that Religion is form'd, by all who speak of it: the outward Acts of it, which alone are capable of being the Subject of human Laws. And these being the Subject of those

those Rules, which are the Terms of Union in that Society, the Civil Establishment of that Religion can imply nothing else, but adding Civil Sanctions to the Rules of that Society, or, in other Words, making the Rules of that Society, Laws also of the Civil Community. Mr. d Chandler is offended with me, for calling this an Incorporation of fuch Religion into the Civil Constitution: But I can form no other Notion of it, nor devise a more proper Term to express it. Not that the religious Society is thereby fwallowed up or extinguish'd, or the former Stipulations of its Members vacated. The fame Relations and Obligations still continue: but those Observances which before were requir'd from the Members. only by the Rules of that Society, are now also requir'd from them as a Civil Obedience, due to the Laws of the Land. When any outward Scheme of Religion is thus become the Matter of a Civil Law, it stands upon the same Foot with the Matter of other Civil Laws; and the

Obedience due to these Laws, is under no other Reserves, but what under the same Circumstances will limit Obedience to other human Laws.

As to the Extent of fuch Establishment, whether it shou'd comprehend more religious Societies than one, whether the publick Profession of others shou'd be tolerated or restrain'd, and what particular Sanctions the Laws enacting it shou'd carry with them, are Questions in the Decision of which the Magistrate may, from a Diversity of Circumstances, with equal Justice and Prudence be determin'd to different Resolutions. The Motives upon which either Choice may be reasonable, will come under Consideration. I here observe that these Circumstances are accidental to the Nature of an Establishment, whose Idea does not necessarily imply a Confinement to one Religion, or a Prohibition of all others; but only a Distinction of that, or those approv'd and directed, by Privileges and Provisions for Support and Protection, ascertain'd by Law. Whatever Re-

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Religion is thus favour'd and diffinguish'd from others by the Laws of any Community, is properly the establish'd Religion of that Community.

WITH what Measures of Support, Encouragement, or Protection the Religion so preferr'd shou'd be favour'd, must be left to the Piety, Munisscence, and Wisdom of the Magistrate: But without some Distinction of the favour'd Religion in these Particulars, I cannot conceive an Establishment, or how an establish'd Religion differs from one not establish'd.

THESE Favours, in whatever Measure they are thought expedient, are supposed to be ascertain'd by Law. These Laws must be enacted with some Sanctions, and these Sanctions must be of a Civil Nature; because no other are within the Compass of Civil Power. Civil Sanctions are either Civil Rewards and Encouragements, or Civil Penalties and Discouragements; and therefore we may conclude in general, that the Laws establishing any Religion, must be enacted with some Sanctions

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Sanctions of these Characters. I proceed then to enquire particularly,

SECT. III.

What Civil Rewards and Encouragements may reasonably and justly be annexed to an Establish'd Religion.

HE Magistrate, I presume, will not be deny'd the same Right and Liberty, of placing his Favours on fuch Objects as he shall most approve, that every private Man claims. He may therefore confer them on any Man, or Society of Men, within his Dominions, as Reasons of Conscience or Civil Prudence shall appear to advise, or even as Affection shall fuggest. He is here supposed to be convinced of the Truth, and Divine Authority of a certain System of Religion, profess'd by a religious Society in his Dominions: To believe its Worship acceptable to God, and that the Doctrines taught and the Discipline used by it, are conducive to the Peace, Virtue, and Interests of the Community. These Convictions will

certainly determine him, to joyn with that Society in Profession and Worship; and he may reasonably esteem it his Duty, to Support the Administrations of it, by Acts of Munificence suitable to his Station and Character, and to recommend it as far as he is able to his Subjects; and therefore to appoint Persons properly qualify'd, to teach and instruct his People in that Religion, to perfuade their Conversion to it, and to officiate in the Ordinances of-it, to as many as shall be converted; with fuch Encouragements of Honour or Support, as may engage their Attention to these Services: And may reasonably hope by fuch a Conduct, to derive the Favour and Bleffing of God on himfelf, and his People.

Is he is persuaded that the Professors of that Religion, his Fellow-worshippers are better qualify'd for his Service; if their Principles or Affection give him a greater Security in their Allegiance and Fidelity than in other Mens, he may reasonably distinguish them by such Marks of Favour and Considence, as by the Constitution

tion are left to his discretionary Disposal. This Determination of Favour to one Society, or Profession of Religion in preference to others, can be no Injustice to any one; for no Man can have a claim of Right to a Matter of mere arbitrary Favour, and confequently can have no Wrong done him in being pass'd by or excluded from it. The same Principles of Reason, Equity and Property, which affert to every private Subject a Right to choose his own Servants, and those who shall act under him, in the Offices of his Family; to limit his Choice to what Religion he pleafes, and, if he thinks the Profession of fome one Religion disposes Men more than others to Honesty, and Fidelity, and fuch a Behaviour as may promote the Peace and Welfare of his Family, to make the Profession of that Religion a Condition of his Service; will also affert to the Magistrate the same Liberty of placing his Trust and Confidence. He has the same Right to prescribe the Rules and Conditions of his Service, and upon the same Motives to make a certain Profession of Religion, a Qualification for it: And all ComComplaints that can be made by those excluded by these Rules, must submit to that unanswerable Reply — May I not do what I will with mine own?

By the Magistrate, I have before explain'd my felf to mean the supreme Civil Legislature in any Community, in virtue of which Character whatever Favours or Distinctions 'tis in his Power to confer on any Man, or Society of Men, he may also ascertain and confirm to them by Law. and they will then be held under the fame Tenure of Right and legal Property, with which any Subject possesses any Donations, Privileges, or Immunities, derived from the Favour of Civil Power, and confirmed to him and his Family by Law. All Laws indeed are repealable by the Legislature in its dernier Refort, and therefore all Rights depending on Law, must be held in Submission to that Authority. But the Laws of an Establishment may be enacted under as strong Provisions for Perpetuity, and the Rights depending on it be as much guarded against Revocation, as any other. But my present Argument

ment only requires me to observe, that while they continue unrepeal'd, they are a Part of the Civil Constitution, and the Rights ascertain'd by them are under the fame Claim and Protection of Law, that any other Rights are. For whatever Right the Law gives, it also protects; and those Persons to whom the Constitution of any State commits the Execution of the Laws, not only may, but are oblig'd, as a legal Duty of their Office, to afford fuch Protection: And more especially, if they have bound themselves by folemn Oath, and the Stipulations of their Office, to afford it. Neither can it be an Offence against Charity, or any moral Rule of human Conduct, for the Persons entitled to such Rights, to call for the Aid of Civil Power, and the Execution of the Law in Defence of them. whenever they are invaded. Neither are the Affertions of this Section, in the least inconfistent with that Concession which the e Letter-writer observes me to make in the f Preface to my Sermons—viz. That the Magistrate owes Justice and

e p. 48. f p. 63.

Protection to all his Subjects -- He certainly does fo: He owes Justice to All: But in Matters of mere Favour, he has the same Liberty to act according to his own Discretion, that every other Man claims. He owes Protection also to All: but 'tis a Protection in their legal Rights: Of those Rights the Law is the Measure: and if any Subject will claim Rights without or against Law, or a Liberty of invading or withholding the legal Rights of others, the Magistrate owes him no Protection in these Claims: On the contrary, the Protection he owes to others, will oblige him to correct and restrain such irregular and injurious Attempts.

I conclude this Head with observing, that when the publick Profession, Worship, and Administrations of any particular Religion, are thus distinguish'd by Allotments of Support and Favour, ascertain'd and confirm'd by Law, That Religion is establish'd. And tho' these Advantages of Preference may, as I have said, be extended to more than one Scheme

Scheme of Religion; (i. e.) the Nature of an Establishment does not necessarily confine it to one, yet I presume Reasons of Prudence will generally determine for the Establishment of but One.

SECT. IV.

What Penalties or Discouragements Civil Power may justly annex to the Laws establishing any Scheme of Religion.

HESE Laws may be consider'd either as directing, prescribing, and encouraging fuch Actions, as the Legislature approves; or as prohibiting, restraining, and discouraging Actions, contrary and opposite to those directed. The Law indeed is transgressed by a bare Incompliance with its Direction, but fuch Transgression is of a very different Confideration from an active Opposition to it. There may be Reason for Lenity and Indulgence in one Case, and equal Reason for Severity in the other. With respect to the Laws establishing any Religion, that those who refuse to comply G 3 with

with the Directions of them, (i. e.) publickly to profess that Religion, and join in the Worship prescribed by it, may justly be excluded from such Privileges and Favours, as the Magistrate has a Right to confer at Discretion, is a necessary Consequence from what was offer'd in the preceding Section. For the Limitation of these Favours to one Profession of Religion, implies an Exclusion of those who do not profess it: And the same Reafons which affert the Magistrate's Right to fuch Limitation, will also affert it to fuch Exclusion. If the Limitation be just, the Exclusion will be so too: And therefore all the Penalties imply'd in these negative Discouragements, may justly be affix'd to a bare Incompliance with an establish'd Religion. And since all Favours given upon certain Conditions, are justly forfeited by a Breach of those Conditions; whoever has receiv'd any Measures of Favour, as Appendages to the Profession of the establish'd Religion, or his Station in that Church, if he afterwards refuses to comply with and fulfil the Terms on which he receiv'd them. is under the same Incapacity, as if he had never comply'd with them, and his Forfeiture is as just in the one Case, as his Exclusion wou'd have been in the other. Both indeed are properly negative Penalties. For tho' fuch Forfeiture may in some Instances be very afflictive, and be attended with the loss even of Livelyhood and Subfistence, yet the Tenure of these Provisions and Advantages, was as purely conditional, as the Man's Admission to them was. As the first Allotment of them was an Act of mere Favour, fo they retain still the fame Nature, and are no longer a Right than the Conditions are perform'd: And therefore his Forfeiture takes from him no more Right, than his Exclusion wou'd have done.

But I beg leave to observe here farther, with a particular View to our own Constitution, that if the Magistrate may, upon such Motives as have been suggested, limit his Service, his voluntary Muniscence, or any Expression of mere Favour, to the Profession of some parti-

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cular Religion, it follows in necessary Confequence, that He may require fuch Profession as a Qualification for these Favours. And if there be any other Religion, from whose Principles He apprehends Danger to the Publick, or Infidelity in his Service, He may upon the same Grounds infift on fuch Proofs and Evidences, as may reasonably assure him, that the Person He admits to these Fayours, is not of that Religion. And if the Principles of that Religion allow, or the Proselytes of it are found in Observation to allow themselves to equivocate, and elude the Test of a bare Profession. He may reasonably demand any other Evidence, more certain and decifive. Now joining in the Worship, and partaking in the Ordinances of a Religion, is unquestionably the furest and best Proof, that any Person is really of that Religion. And where Regards of his own Happiness or Duty, and a Concern for publick Safety, advise the Magistrate to exclude the Professors of some particular Religion from his Trust and Favour, the only Test that can give him any Security make

rity in his Choice, is a Participation in fuch Ordinances, as 'tis supposed that Religion will not allow its Proselytes to comply with. Every private Subject may, if he pleases, make the Prosession of the establish'd or any other Religion, a Condition of his distinguishing Favours, and exclude any from his Service, whose Principles he apprehends indispose them to be faithful, or may endanger the Peace of his Family; and to deny this to the Magistrate, is resusing him a Liberty, which his meanest Subject enjoys.

MUCH Clamour I know has been rais'd against the Tests of this Kind, required by our Laws, as a Qualification for publick Offices: I think they are vindicated by what has been already suggested: But because some Objections have been urged with great Noise and Desiance, I hope a particular Consideration of them, will not appear foreign to my Subject.

1st, IT is objected, that 'tis a Profanation of so solemn an Act of Christian Religion, as receiving the Eucharist, to make

make it a Condition of Civil Favour. But if the being a Christian, or a Christian of the establish'd Church, may upon wife and good Reasons be made a Condition of fuch Favour, the Nature of the Thing requires fome Evidence of the Fact. And I cannot imagine what Prophaness it is for a Christian, or a Christtian of the establish'd Church, to testify his being fo, by any Act of that Religion. If he is not prepar'd for that Ordinance, 'tis his own Fault; He may and ought to be; His Religion requires him to receive and to be prepared for it: And what his Religion requires from him, the Magistrate may also in this Case require. as an Evidence of his Religion. If he receives unworthily indeed, he may prophane that Ordinance; but the Command of the Magistrate requiring him to receive, is no more accessory to that Profanation, than the Command of his Religion, which also requires him to receive, and advises a Frequency in that Duty. If the Magistrate commanded him to receive unworthily, He wou'd then indeed be Partaker of his Crime. but but requiring him to receive worthily, is only requiring him to do his Duty. Tis true, if he were not at all required to receive, he wou'd not receive unworthily; but the Command of the Magifirate, no more makes him receive unworthily, than the Command of his Religion. And lastly, the Command of the Magistrate to receive in this Case is not absolute, but proposed only as a Condition of his Favour, which he is at full Liberty to decline, and ought to decline, if he cannot without Sin comply with the Terms of it. Well, but

"this Sacrament, according to the Rites and Usage of the established Church, as a Condition of Civil Favours, puts them under great Temptations to be Hypocrites, and act against their Conficience." But does the Law make them Hypocrites? That supposes them to be honest Men, and to act sincerely; and if they are Hypocrites, 'tis their own Wickedness, and not the Law which makes them so. Both these Objections lie

lie with equal Force, against the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. An Oath is a folemn Act of Religion, and capable of great Profanations. And the requiring these Oaths, as a Condition of publick Offices, may occasion their being sometimes taken rashly and inconsiderately; and the Advantages annexed to these Offices, are strong Temptations to those who scruple or disapprove these Oaths, to take them in Deceit and Hypocrify, and against their Conscience. 'Tis a hard Case, no doubt, upon poor Men, that they cannot be admitted into Offices by the Profits, Power, and Influence of which they might raise their Fortunes, strengthen and encourage their Party, and be enabled to do a deal of Mischief. but upon the hard Terms of Hypocrify and Perjury; but I prefume these Considerations will not appear of Weight enough, to induce our Legislature to repeal these Laws. I have heard a

3d OBJECTION of much the same Size with these— That by this Test, an Ordinance of Christ intended to be Pledge

of Love and Union, is turn'd into a Distinction of Parties, an Instrument of Strife, and an Occasion of Hatred and Animolities. But what do these Objecters mean? Christ intended this Ordinance to be as much a Diffinction of his Disciples from other Men, as a Pledge of Union among themselves: And receiving it in any particular Church, is as truly and properly a Mark of Distinction of those who are Members of that Church, or in Communion with it, from those who are not fo, as a Mark or Pledge of Union between themselves; and the very Reason why it is requir'd in the present Case, is because it is in its Nature and Intention a Mark of Distinction; and if the Magistrate may reasonably make such Distinction in conferring his Favours, 'tis also reafonable for him to require this Mark of it. Neither can I imagine, how receiving the Sacrament in this Case, destroys Love and Charity. Does a Man's thus receiving, make him love others, or others love him less than before? Men whose Eyes are evil, may perhaps envy him the Advantages, of which this is the Condition: But I prefume,

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fume, receiving this Ordinance is not what is envy'd him; neither wou'd his Office be less envy'd him, if he had it without this Condition, or upon any other.

In short, if the Magistrate may justly limit his Favours to Men of any particular Character, he may justly require any Actions in Evidence of that Character, which that Character is reasonably supposed to qualify and oblige Men to perform. And he who is excluded from such Favours, for Incompliance with these Terms has no Injustice to complain of; nothing is taken from him to which he can pretend any Claim of Right, and consequently he receives no Wrong.

THESE negative Penalties then, may justly be affixed to a bare Incompliance with an establish'd Religion. But I cannot perceive, that either the Ends of Civil Society require, or that the Principles of Religion advise any other. Whatever indeed deseats, or obstructs the Ends of Civil Society, is justly subject to positive Penalties; but a bare Incompliance with

an establish'd Religion, not attended with any active Opposition to the Law, does not appear to obstruct or endanger any End or Interest of Civil Society: And therefore the Magistrate cannot be oblig'd by any Civil End of his Office, to compel Mens Compliance by positive Penalties. And when we confider this Cafe upon Principles of Religion, and particularly Christian Religion, there appears no Foundation for compulfive Penalties in it. For suppose it the Duty of every Christian, to promote the Reception of that Religion, as far as his Station, Capacities, and Opportunities enable him to do it; and that the Magistrate is under this Obligation, as well as other Christians: This Obligation, fo far as it arises from that Religion, must be limited to those Methods, which that Religion prescribes to be used in the Propagation of it; among which Compulsion by Civil Penalties cannot be found. 2dly, Let us consider what we mean by the promoting the Reception of that Religion: Is it not converting Men to a Belief of its Faith, and an Approbation of its Worship,

ship, &c. as directed or approv'd by God? But Compulsion by Civil Penalties, has not in its Nature the least Aptitude to produce these Effects. Force cannot alter a Man's Judgment of the Truth of a Proposition, or the Lawfulness of an Action. When a Man professes himself convinced in the Refult of his best Application, that an Action is finful, forbidden by God, the Prescription of the Civil Magistrate cannot in the least change the Appearance and Character of the Action, with Respect to the divine Law: And while he continues in this Judgment, the Action must be confess'd Sin in him, whatever it is in its felf. And fince no Man can lawfully force another to do an Action, by which 'tis apparent that he must sin against God, it follows, that in the Case here supposed, no Force can justly be used to compel a Man, to an active Compliance with the But I acknowledge the common Arguments against Force to be good and conclusive, provided they are restrain'd to a bare Incompliance with the Religion establish'd; and therefore need not enlarge

enlarge farther on this Head: But negative Penalties may, as I have faid, be justly applied in this Case. All that the Magistrate can do farther, towards engaging an active Compliance with the Religion he has establish'd, is providing for Information and Instruction. fince Attention to fuch Applications is an Action in every one's Power, and against which no Pretense of Reason, or Scruples of Conscience can be pleaded, I can fee no Objection against requiring fuch Attention, under positive Penalties: For a Penalty cannot be unjust, when the Action required under it is innocent, reasonable, and in the Power of the Person from whom it is required. I have heard the Fews at Rome are obliged to be present at certain Seasons at Discourses in Proof of the Christian Religion. I mention this as what I think a wife and a Christian Constitution; whether it be practicable, or advifable in other Cases and other Countries, must be left to the Judgment of publick Authority; but furely it cannot be unjust any where.

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What Penalties may be affix'd to an active Opposition of the Laws of an Establishment.

THAT with Regard to their Effect on the Civil Peace and Order of the Community, there is a great Difference between not actively complying with a Law, and acting in Opposition to it, is fo evident, that it need only be observ'd. In this View therefore, Civil Power will be justify'd in a different Conduct towards them; and a Coercion of the one may be as just and reasonable, as Indulgence to the other. The Magistrate indeed, being by the Nature and End of his Office, the Guardian of the Civil Peace and Interests of the Community, must also be the Judge of their Danger; and confequently, must determine his own Conduct, fo far as it depends purely on this Motive. And if Actions done in Opposition to the Laws of an Establishment, appear dangerous to the Peace, Esc.

Gr. of the Community, it will be as much a Duty of his Office to restrain these Actions by positive Penalties, as any other of the same Tendency. I do not univerfally affirm, that the tolerating any active Opposition to an Establishment, is always and in all Circumstances dangerous to Civil Peace: In some Circumstances it may be necessary to preserve it: But so far and in such Cases as the Action does endanger Civil Peace. fo far 'tis just and reasonable to restrain it. Since then the Reasons for Toleration or Restraint, arise chiefly from the Tendency and Influence of the Action on Civil Peace, it will be necessary for the Resolution of the present Question, to enquire by what Actions the Laws of an Establishment may be opposed, and how far Civil Peace may be endanger'd by them. and Omershir of submers must much so a cognitable, bus all b. Gigst

Now the Laws of an Establishment may be actively opposed,

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2dly, By publickly professing and teaching some other Religion, and setting up and assembling in separate Congregations, for a different Worship from that establish'd.

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3dly, Br publickly disputing the Truth of that Religion, the Lawfulness of its Worship, &c. and endeavouring to disfuade Mens Approbation and Conformity to it.

of the Magistrate to establish that or any Religion, or the Expediency of the present Establishment.

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So far as any of these Actions may endanger the Civil Peace, the Virtue, or Interests of the Community, they are and must be cognisable by the Civil Magistrate, and may be restrain'd by Law, under Penalties proportionable to the Danger threatned by them. I will consider them distinctly.

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Religion is necessary to the Ends of Civil Society, open Prophaness and Irreligion must be both in Principle and Example destructive to it: And I presume no one will plead for their Exemption from positive Penalties.

two was dealer with a local party and the control of the control o 2dly, THE publick Professing, Teaching, and Exercise of different Schemes of Religion, may from different Circumstances be either dangerous, or not dangerous to Civil Peace, &c. and accordingly as they appear under either of these Characters, this Motive may persuade the Magistrate, either to restrain them under positive Penalties, or indulge an Exemption from them. A legal Exemption of the publick Profession and Worship of any particular Religion from pofitive Penalties, is the fame Thing with a Toleration of it; and therefore I shall consider them as equivalent Terms. Now when any Sect maintains Principles inconsistent with Civil Peace, this is confess'd a good Reason for refusing it a H 3 To-

Toleration. They are excluded from it by the & Letter writer; and Mr. h Chandler tells us, he does not contend for a Liberty to act contrary to the Peace and Order of Societies—or to tie up the Hands of the Magistrate from censuring, restraining, or punishing Offenders, against the Peace or good Order of Civil Society; and consequently he must agree in the Letter-writer's Exception; for Principles inconfistent with Peace and Order, will naturally lead Men to act contrary to Peace and Order; and a Toleration of the publick Profession of such Principles, will include a Toleration of fuch Actions. And if the Magistrate may refuse to tolerate any Sect maintaining, (i. e.) publickly professing and teaching such Principles, he may restrain it by a Prohibition under positive Penalties. Neither can the Reasons of this Restraint, be confin'd merely to the Case specified, viz. a Sect's maintaining Principles incon-

^{\$} p. 18. h Pref. p. 49.

aftent with Civil Peace and Order. For the Reason which justifies such Restraint in this Cafe, is the Apprehension of Danger to Civil Peace, from tolerating the publick Profession of such Principles. And if the fame Apprehensions of Danger to Civil Peace, arise from any other Circumstances of a Toleration, they will be as good a Reason for Restraint, as the maintaining such Principles. This Concession, which the Nature of the Thing, and the Evidence of Truth extorted from these Gentlemen, leaves the whole Question of a Toleration intirely to the Magistrate's Judgment. For as I have faid, he being the Guardian of Civil Peace, and by the Trust and Intention of his Office obliged to prohibit and refrain such Actions as endanger it, must be the ultimate Judge of fuch Danger. If he apprehends the Principles maintain'd by any sect, to be inconsistent with Civil Peace, he is allowed to restrain the publick Profession of that Sect; and the same Apprehension of Danger, arising from any other Circumstance of such Profession; will equally H 4 iusti-Con-

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fon will extend, with the same Justice to ten Sects, as to one. The Extent of the Restraint to more or sewer Sects, depends on the Extent of the Danger. Of this Danger the Magistrate must be Judge, and consequently the Rule of his Conduct in this Case, must arise from his own Apprehensions of Danger: And if he apprehends the Toleration of one or more Sects, or any Toleration at all, to be dangerous to Civil Peace, he is by this Concession protected in refusing it.

So far then as Considerations of Civil Peace, and the Interests of the Community, are the Rule of the Magisfrate's Conduct in this Case, it must be less to his Judgment to what Professions of Religion, opposite to that establish'd, he should extend a Toleration; or whether to any at all. No Doubt the Magisfrate may misjudge in the Application of this Rule, may apprehend Danger to Civil Peace where there is none, or conceive it greater than it is, and in Con-

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Confequence of fuch Mistake, exclude from Toleration fuch Sects or Professions of Religion, as this Reason would not exclude. And I very freely acknowledge, that a Toleration of some Protestions of Religion, different from the establish'd, may in some Cases be not only confistent with the Peace, and Interests of the Civil Society, but necessary to promote and fecure them: As to filence all Calumnies on this Head, I declare my felf to think it in our own Nation: But still this whole Question must in the Result be left to the Magistrate's Judgment, upon the Appearances of Danger or Security before him. And wherever he thinks it expedient to grant a Toleration, the fame Confiderations will advise him to limit it under such Rules and Restrictions, as may secure the Publick from any evil Confequences to its Peace or Safety.

Safeed exceeded oblice him to allow you adly, As to publickly disputing the Truth of an establish'd Religion, &c. 'Tis certainly no Fault in any Man to doubt of a Truth, which does not appear Methods

to him: And 'tis his Duty to examine. what he is called upon to admit, with Care and Attention, and propose his Doubts and Scruples to fuch Persons. from whom he may reasonably expect Satisfaction; especially in a Concern of such Moment as his Religion: And 'tis very reasonable that such Liberty of Inquiry shou'd be allow'd him, as the Satisfaction of a private Man may in Equity be prefumed to require. But a Man may in Equity be prefumed capable of all the Satiffaction, that 'tis his Duty to feek for, by Methods of private Application. No Principles of Reason or Religion, can oblige a Man to fuspend his Resolution in a Question of this Nature, till he has consulted all Mankind, or even the whole Community he belongs to, upon, it. And therefore the most equitable Regard, the Magistrate can be suppos'd to owe to the Satisfaction of any private Subject, cannot oblige him to allow an Application of fuch Extent as this. b'dla dimin has

But how many or how difficultly refolv'd foever his Scruples may be, if the Methods

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Methods he takes of debating them be dangerous to publick Peace, the Magistrate will, under this Consideration, be allow'd and oblig'd to restrain them, for the same Reasons that he may restrain publick Professions of the same Tendency. The Question then, on this Head, is not how far the Magistrate may reafonably allow any Applications of a private Nature, for the Satisfaction of a Person, who doubts of the Truth of Doctrines, or the Lawfulness of a Worfhip establish'd; but whether a Regard to Civil Peace, may not in some Cases oblige him, both in Prudence and Duty, to restrain the Publication of Books. and filence any publick Contests and Challenges of this Kind, in Opposition to the Religion He has establish'd: In Theory perhaps we may conceive fuch Disputes to be so manag'd and regulated, as not to affect Civil Peace: But while Men have Passions, this will very rarely happen in Fact. We see in past and prefent Experience, how apt such Debates are to grow warm and distemper'd, to break out into Affronts and personal Provocations,

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vocations, and produce Civil Factions and Animolities, or be apply'd to the Promotion of them. And Civil Wisdom is concern'd to guard against such Actions, as have a general and probable Tendency to produce Effects of great Danger to the Publick, and can only be render'd inoffensive by such a Temper and Conduct, as the common Passions of Mankind will rarely permit us to expect, and can hardly be provided for by any Regulations of Law. The Author of Grounds and Reasons observes, very pertinently to this Argument, into what Feuds the City of Hamburg ran, on Occasion of a Dispute between two Ministers, whether in the Lord's Prayer. the first Words shou'd be translated Our Father, or Father Our, under whom the Citizens were work'd up into great Heat and Flame, and at length divided themselves into Parties, and fought daily in the Streets. He assures us he omits a thousand other Instances to the same purpose: But I presume a Quarter of

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i Pref. p. 27.

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that Number, are sufficient to convince any reasonable Man, how apt Men left publickly to dispute what they will, are to engage with great Fierceness about Trifles, and how apt fuch Debates are to endanger Civil Peace. He tells us indeed, that k nothing of this cou'd happen under Liberty and free Debate. I confels I am of a quite different Judgment, and imagine this Broil to have been purely the Consequence of fuch Liberty, and that nothing of it had happen'd, if the Magistrate had interposed, and silenced the Debate when it began. But he is fure that if no 1 Man got or lost any Thing by maintaining either Side of a Question, there wou'd then be nothing to raise or feed the Spirit of Contention? I never heard that the Revenues of either of the Hamburg Ministers, depended on the Reception of Our Father, or Father our, into the Translation. The Civil Establishment of Religion there, wou'd have been just the same which ever obtain'd: And I suppose the Au-

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thors of that Contest had no other Interest in it, but a Concern for the Reputation of their Judgment; a Passion as incident to Laity as Clergy, and capable in either of producing very ill Ef. fects on publick Peace, and therefore what the Magistrate may justly restrain-To this foreign Instance of the ill Effects of the Liberty contended for, and the Thoufand more omitted, I will add one domestick, of the good Effects of restraining it. The Case is not out of Memory. when a great and wife Prince of this Nation, very tender of all just Liberties in Religion, and no Bigot himself to any, the Glorious King William, found it reafonable and necessary to interpole in a publick Dispute of this Nature, and filence it by Authority; and the good Effect of that Conduct, as well as the great Character of that Prince, will always in like Cases recommend the Example. But Buremond by situations

4thly, For a private Subject publickly to deny the Right of the Magistrate to establish any Religion, or publickly -28H .

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to censure the Equity or Expediency of the present Establishment, and reproach it as unjust or tyrannical, is Mutiny and Sedition. This is an Action of a very different Nature, from inquiring into the Truth of a Religion. For tho' the acknowledg'd Truth of a Religion, may be a chief Motive to the Legislator to effablish it, yet the Conclusion afferted by the Law is not .- This is a true Religion, much less this is the only true Religion, (for He may believe several other Schemes of Religion equally true, and yet be determin'd by very good Reasons to establish That.) But the Conclusion of the Law is precisely this. "This is the Religion shall be favour'd " with a Civil Establishment in this " Community-... " This Conclusion is a Civil Law of that Community, stands upon the same Foot, and is equally protected from the publick Opposition of private Subjects, with any other Law of the fame Importance. This Point will come again into Confideration: And I shall only here observe, that if the Magiffrate has, as I hope I have shewn he has-

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has, a Right to establish such Religion as He approves, this is a Right of great Importance to himself and his People. In the same Proportion and for the same Reasons, that some Religion is necessary to the Ends of Society, some publick Provision for Religion is necessary; and no publick Provision can be made for Religion, but by establishing some particular Scheme for it: And confequently denying this Right to the Magistrate, is denying him a Right of the utmost Importance to the Happiness of the Society; and publickly perfuading Men not to own or fubmit to this Right, is perfuading them to oppose, and take from Him a just and necessary Branch of his Supremacy; and if this be not Sedition, I know not what is. And as to the Expediency or Inexpediency of the Terms of a present Establishment, all Questions of this Kind are merely of prudential Consideration, and must by the Nature of all Society be left to the Resolutions of publick Wisdom; and if a private Subject takes upon him publickly to oppose or censure such Resolution.

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tion, He intrudes into the Province of the Magistrate, and usurps upon his proper Authority. To which I may add, that when the Favours of an Establishment are fix'd and settled by Law on the Professors of any Religion, they become their legal Property, and are protected by Law from Insults and Invasion.

I have consider'd these several Acts of Opposition to an Establishment, with regard to their Influence on Civil Peace, &c. I presume it appears that Civil Peace may be endanger'd by them: And I shall take the Liberty to conclude, that whenever it is so, the Magistrate may justly restrain them under positive Penalties.

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But the Magistrate's Rule, in this Case, will arise chiefly from Regards of Civil Peace, &c. which extend his Cognisance to all publick Professions, and all Acts of Opposition to Law of what Character soever; yet in some Instances, Motives of Religion and Conscience towards God may concur with them, and I justly

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justly determine his Conduct. If the publick Professions or Worship of any Sect contain Blasphemies against the God He adores, if they maintain Principles affrontive to the Attributes of the Divine Nature, and which tend to introduce Irreligion and Prophanes, He may reasonably esteem himself obliged in Conscience, and from that Concern he owes to the Honour of God, to restrain them.

But because 'tis usual on this Subject, to hear profuse Harangues on the natural Rights and Liberty of Conscience, and the great Violence and Injustice of restraining Men from acting according to it, I will consider,

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SECT. VI.

How far such Acts of Opposition to an Establishment, as I have before mention'd, are protected from the Censure and Restraint of the Magistrate, by this Plea of Conscience.

FOR the Resolution of this Question, it may be proper to inquire,

If, WHETHER a Plea of Conscience can exempt these Actions, from the Cenfure of the Magistrate.

adb, Ho w far Conscience can be pleaded for these Actions, upon any Principles of Reason or Religion.

Now 'tis acknowledg'd, that Conficience as an internal Act of the Mind is submitted only to God, neither has the Magistrate or any Mortal on Earth Authority over it. In determining the Rule and Measures of Duty, it acts with a Liberty, which no human Power can I 2

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take from it, or controul. But nevertheless, all outward Actions, from what Principle foever they flow, as they are relative to other Men, and are attended with Civil Confequences, must, as I have faid, be subject to the Regulations of Civil Power. For what is it we mean by Liberty of Conscience? Is it a Liberty for every Man to do what Actions he pleases. without Restraint and Controul, provided he has or professes a Persuasion of Conscience to do them? I presume such a Liberty as this, which must render all Laws and Authority perfectly useless to the Purposes of Society, will not be contended for. Some Limits then must be set to human Actions as they relate to Society, within which the Magistrate must have a Right to restrain them: And if any of the Actions before consider'd, are manifestly dangerous to the Peace and Welfare of the Society, a Plea of Conscience cannot alter the Rule of the Magistrate's Duty, or exempt them from his Restraint or Correction. It is allow'd in the Concessions abovemention'd, that he may refuse to tolerate the publick Profession of any

any Sect, which maintains Principles inconsistent with the Peace, and Order of the Civil Community. I will suppose the Profelytes of fuch Sect, may be as fully perfuaded of the Truth of these Principles, and their Duty publickly to profess and teach them, and act according to them, as any other Sect can be of theirs; at least they may pretend to be so, which to human Inspection, which cannot distinguish Conscience from Pretense, is the same thing. In this Case then, it seems the fundamental Rights of Liberty in Matters of Religion, and acting according to the private Judgment or Conscience, may be overrul'd by the Magistrate. And fince every equal Appearance of Danger. equally requires the Magistrate's Care to prevent it, if the publick Profession of any Sect appears equally dangerous to Civil Peace, &c. from any other Circumstance attending it, this will render it equally just and reasonable to overrule the Plea of Conscience in the Restraint of it, as the publickly maintaining fuch Principles. And if the Plea of Conscience may for these Reasons be overruled in the

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Restraint of one Sect, it may for the same Reason be overruled in the Restraint of Ten. The Plea of Conscience therefore does not at all alter my Resolution of this Case; it stands, where I left it, in the Magistrate's Discretion, whether he should tolerate or not tolerate any Sect, as the Danger, Security, or Promotion of the Civil Peace, and Interests of the Community, appear to advise the one, or the other. And in the same Proportion that any of those other Acts of Opposition to an establish'd Religion, are injurious to the Rights of the Magistrate or Subject, or in any other Respect dangerous to the Peace, Virtue, or Order of the Community, they may justly be restrain'd and punish'd, whatever Plea of Conscience the Actors may offer for them. But fetting aside the Regards of Civil Peace, &c. it may be worth the while to inquire.

or Principle, any Man can think himself oblig'd in Conscience, to any of these Acts of Opposition to an Establish'd Religion. For the where the Action in its appa-

apparent Tendency and Influence is dangerous to Civil Peace, &c. no Perfualion or Pretense of Conscience will exempt it from the Coercion of the Magistrate; yet if all reasonable or probable Plea of Conscience can be taken away from any of these Actions, his Restraint of them will be perfectly clear'd from this Objection, and it cannot be even pretended that any Liberty of Conscience is infringed by it. Now tho' Conscience is a private and personal Principle, and its Resolutions are determinable only by the Conclusions of a Man's own Judgment, yet there are certain general Distinctions of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, which every Man as a rational Being may be supposed able and obliged to perceive; and therefore whoever acts in plain Contradiction to these Maxims, cannot in the Judgment of another Man be consider'd as acting under a fincere Perfuasion of Conscience. or be intitled to any Favour or Indulgence by that Plea. But then there are a Multitude of Cases, in which from the great Diversity of Mens Capacities, Improvements, or Prepossessions, the Application I 4 of

of very proper Rules of Action may be difficult; and the in opposite Judgments but one can be right, yet the Error of him we think mistaken, may appear a pardonable Deduction from a very reasonable Principle, and as such to merit all the Indulgence from other Men, that can consist with their own Duty: But where no reasonable Principle of Conscience can be pretended, no Regard at all is due to the Plea of it.

Nothing can be a Rule of Conscience, but some Law of God, real or supposed; and therefore no Man can pretend to be restrain'd by Conscience from an Action, or obliged by Conscience to an Action, but by a Persuasion that the one is forbidden, the other required by fome Law of God, natural or revealed. In the present Case it must be supposed, that both he who refuses to comply with the Law, and he who actively opposes it, will appear to the Magistrate to be mistaken in their respective Persuasions; for the Law is a plain Declaration, that he himfelf is of different Judgment. But if in the

the one Case, an honest Man may be prefumed to mistake, in applying a reasonable Rule of Conscience, and in the other no Rule of Conscience can be pretended, these Mistakes must appear under very different Characters, with Respect to Conscience,

WHEN we consider the various Capacities and Prejudices of Men, we cannot wonder to find another Man think that Religion false, which appears to us with the greatest Certainty of Truth. He may apprehend the Doctrines of it, to be contrary to some Principle of Reason, or some acknowledg'd Revelation. Reason and Revelation are proper Rules of his Judgment in this Question. But perhaps a very honest Man in his Circumstances, may mistake in the Application of these Rules. In this Case, if he cannot be convinced by Argument, to oblige him by Civil Force to profess that Religion, wou'd as I have faid be a Violence on Conscience. But if no imaginable Rule of Conscience can oblige a Man actively to oppose an established Religion which he

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he thinks false, to restrain such Opposition can be no Violence on Conscience at all.

WHEN the same Revelation is generally acknowledg'd by the Members of a Community. That will be a Rule of Conscience to them, so far as its Direction reaches. But 'tis possible, that in Application of this Rule, by the different Apprehensions of Men. different and opposite Schemes of Religion may be deduced from it. The Magistrate establishes one of these which he approves. But 'tis obvious to suppose, that an active Compliance with this Establishment, may appear finful and forbidden, to a Man of other Apprehensions. For if a single Article in the Profession required from him appears false, or a single Act in the Worship directed, and in which he is call'd upon to join, appears sinful, a Man cannot with good Conscience profess the one, or practife the other. And an Action will appear finful to him not only from an express Prohibition, but if he apprehends it forbidden under any general Rules. And when we observe the Mul-

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tiplicity of Points, upon which Conseience must in this Case deliberate, and how difficult it often must be to fix the exact Extent of general Rules, it will be very reasonable to expect many real Scruples, against an active Compliance with the Law.

But before Conscience can oblige a Man actively and publickly to oppose a Law, it must not only appear to him that the Law ought to be fo opposed but that 'tis a Duty of his Station to oppose it. And the Law of God supposed to be the Ground of this Obligation. ought to be very plain and clear in both these Points; for if either of these Points be doubtful, the proper Resolution of Conscience is not to act. For a plain Law of God, and even the Nature of Society requires us, not to oppose the Laws of our Superiors, when we can omit it without disobeying God. When therefore we only doubt whether there be any Law of God, requiring us to oppose them, we ought certainly to be determin'd by the plain Law, not to oppose

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god requires, or appears to any Man to require, an active Opposition to the Laws of an Establishment, he is certainly oblig'd in Conscience to obey it; and this Obligation may arise either as a Conclusion from some general Law of Action prescrib'd to all Men, or to all in his Station, or from an immediate and special Command to him. And so far as any of those Acts of Opposition to an establish'd Religion, are reducible to any such general or special Law, so far a Man may be oblig'd in Conscience to them.

SECT. VII.

Whether there be any general Obligation on Conscience, thus actively to oppose an establish'd Religion.

Now where a Man apprehends it unlawful for him to join in Communion and Worship with an establish'd Religion, if he has Opportunity of joining in these Acts, with another religious

Affembly which he approves, he may reasonably think it his Duty so to do because he may from very good Grounds conclude, that focial Worship, where practicable, is a Duty. Whether the Magistrate should permit such Assemblies, depends as I have faid on Confiderations of Civil Peace, &c. That in some Circumstances, and under proper Limitations, the Permission of such Assemblies may not only confift with Civil Peace, &c. but be promotive of it, I have allowed; and whenever it is so, a Regard to the Conscience of those so perfuaded, may very reasonably determine the Magistrate to grant it. But then by any publick Acts to endeavour the Subversion of the Establishment, to stir up Parties and Factions against it, to labour by publick preaching or writing (farther than the Exercise of Religion in fuch permitted Assemblies requires) to withdraw Mens Submission from it. and gather Congregations in Opposition to it, are Actions which I conceive no general Rule of Conscience can oblige Men to; and therefore an unlimited Liberty

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berty in them cannot be claim'd as a Liberty due to Conscience And much less can such Obligation be pleaded, publickly to oppose the Right of the Legislature, to establish the present or any other Religion. And I have the Satiffaction to find an Author cited with Approbation, by in Grounds and Reasons, &c. on this Argument, in Judgment with me. Sir W. Temple having observed the Freedom which Men enjoy in the united Provinces - " That no Man there could complain of Pressure in his Conscience, of being forced to any publick Profession of his private Faith; of being restrain'd from his own Manner of Wor. Ship in his own House, or being oblig'd to any other Abroad: Immediately adds And whoever asks more in Point of Religion, without the undisputed Evidence of a particular Mission from Heaven, may justly be suspected not to ask for God's Sake, but his own. He goes on into a Reflection, which the Author citing him has thought it convenient to curtail, and

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m Preface p. 32. n Observ. on the Netherlands p. 205.

in Effect to drop-fince pretending to Sovereignty, instead of Liberty in Opil nion, is indeed pretending the same in Authority too, which confifts chiefly in Opinion. And what Man or Party foever can gain the common and firm Belief of being most immediately instructed, inspired, or favour'd by God, will easily obtain the Prerogative of being most bonour'd and obey'd by Men. In the Judgment of this ingenious Statesman, and profes'd Patron of all Liberty of Conscience, that can consist with the Peace and Order of Government, no Man can ordinarily claim more under this Plea. than a Freedom from being forced publickly to profess his private Faith, a Liberty to worship God in his own House, according to his Perfuasion - That without a particular Mission or Command from Heaven, no Man who dissents from an establish'd Religion, can pretend Conscience for any Action beyond this; and therefore not for publickly endeavouring to diffurb and unfettle the Opinions of others, and convert them to his own- That whoever asks a Liberty to

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do this, without good Evidence of a special Call, may justly be suspected not to act upon Motives of Conscience, but Views of his own Interests- That 'tis pretending to Sovereignty over other Mens Opinions, instead of Liberty in bis own- And fince the Authority of Civil Governours confifts chiefly in the Opinion and Esteem of their Subjects, he who pretends to this Sovereignty in Opinion, and labours for this Deference of others Judgment to his own, may be fuspected of Designs on Civil Authority too- For whoever can gain the common and firm Belief of being immediately inspired, instructed, or specially favour'd by God, or by any other Character of Knowledge or Judgment can acquire the same Authority, which those Prefumptions would give him, will be fuperior to the Magistrate himself, in the Honour and Obedience of his Subjects. I prefume I have done this celebrated Writer Juftice in this Paraphrase; whether his Reasoning be exactly just or not, I am not concern'd to enquire. That his Reflection is pointed

at the Claim, or Permission of an unbounded Liberty, for those who diffent from an establish'd Religion, to use publick Endeavours to draw Men from it. and form Parties against it, is plain from the whole Tenor of the Argument: This he resolves no general Rule of Conscience can oblige any Man to do, and Civil Power may from just Apprehensions of Danger to its Authority restrain from being done. The imperfect Citation of this Passage, in which the latter Part is filently drop'd, feems intended to lead the Reader to apply it, as a Reproof of all Authority in the Clergy of an establish'd Church. But the Author had but a little before observed, and approved the Establishment of Religion in Holland, and understood Mankind too well not to know, that the publick Teachers in any religious Society will unavoidably have fome Authority of Judgment with the Members of it; and that generally those who oppose and labour to take from them this Authority, only mean to transfer it to themselves. That the Preaching, &c. of the Clergy of

of an establish'd Church, being confin'd to a Rule approved and prescrib'd by the Magistrate, and the Authority of their Office thus limited by Law, and under eafy Restraint whenever it exceeds its Bounds, is a great Strength and Support to the Authority of the Magistrate. have gone a Length in my Remarks on this Citation, which I hope the Reader will pardon, because 'tis the only Trouble of this kind I shall give him; tho' I am persuaded, that most of the Authorities alledg'd in this Question, if 'twere worth the while to examine them, wou'd be found as unfair, or as impertinent as this. But the bare Affirmation of any Man is of very little Weight, in a Question whose Resolution depends on moral Principles of Action; till some fuch Principle can be shewn, I have as much Right to deny there is any fuch, as any one has to affirm it.

IT has been pretended indeed, that common o Humanity and Charity obli-

[.] Lit. Sch. p. 408.

ges every Man thus to oppose, whatever he apprehends to be an Error, and rescue his Fellow Creatures from Delufion. I have p formerly confider'd this Plea with Respect to the great Case in View, an Opposition to establish'd Christianity, and endeavour'd to shew it inconclusive; and am at Liberty to infift on what I have there offer'd, till some Reason be given me to retract it. But in a more general Consideration of this Plea, if an Error does the Persons who are under it no Harm, Charity will not concern it felf about it; nor can this Principle oblige any Man's Conscience to endeavour to correct it, even by private Applications, and much less by publick Acts of Opposition to Authority. And where fome Evils are apprehended from an Error, if they are of a Civil Nature, these will in the Event amount only to Objections of Inexpedience, or Inconvenience. The Matter will not be a Consideration of Conscience, but of Civil Prudence; and as fuch must be

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P. Serm. p. 184.

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fubmitted to the Resolutions of publick Wisdom.

IF a religious Charity for the Souls of Men, be offer'd as a Principle obliging the Conscience to this Conduct. I observe that this cannot without great Inconsistency be pleaded by those, who lay it down as a fundamental Principle, "That " every Man is fafe and fecure of God's " Approbation, who believes and wor-" ships according to the full Persuasion-" of his own Mind." For I will take the Freedom to suppose, that Men professing an establish'd Religion, may be fincerely and fully perfuaded of the Truth of it, and their Duty to worship God according to the Rules of it; and unless we have great Evidence of the contrary. Charity will oblige us to believe they do fo. They are then according to this Principle, fafe and fecure of God's Approbation. And can Charity perfuade us to unsettle their Minds, to fill them with Doubts and Distrusts of their Condition and Duty, and take from them their present Security? If the Principle he

be univerfally true, they are fafe under it, and our Application to correct their Error can do them no Service. If it be not univerfally true, but must be limited with an Exception to their Persuafion, the same Reasons that except their Persuasion, will also except others; and the Principle will in the Event come to no more than a Considence of each Man in his own Persuasion, and a Condemnation of all who differ from him.

Is it be said, that Christianity requires its Disciples to correct the Mistakes of their Brethren, and turn them from the Error of their Ways, &c. I answer, Christianity obliges every Member of the Church, saithfully to discharge the Duties of his Station in it. They who exhort to attend on Exhortation—They who teach on Teaching—They who rule to do it with Diligence—The Pastors of the Flock, it commands to watch over it with Care, to guard it against Wolves, to oppose

¹ Jam. 5. 10. r Rom. 12. Ad. 20. 28. Ad. 20. 29.

u false Teachers, and those who privily bring in damnable Heresies. It is doubtless a Duty of their Office to do this publickly, as well as from House to House; to be * instant in Season and out of Season; and how much soever Civil Authority may forbid it. But I cou'd never yet see any Precept of the Gospel, requiring every private Christian to do this. In the private Applications of Friendship and Conversation, all Christians are directed to instruct the Ignorance of their Brethren, and in general to use such Discourse, y as may minister Grace unto the Hearers. But what is all this to fetting up for publick Teachers, and gathering Congregations, in Opposition to all Authority, Civil and Ecclefiaftical? Does any Precept of our Religion, oblige every private Christian to do this? With Respect to those within the Church, of which they are Members, they are under general Directions to zobey those who rule over them-To do all things without murmuring or

u 2 Pet. 2. × 2 Tim. 4. 2. y Epb. 4. 24. 2 Hel. 13. 17.

disputing - b To walk by the same Rule, to peak the same Things, &c. The Obligation indeed of these general Rules, is limited by a Reserve for that prior Obedience, which every Christian owes to the Divine Law. If the Prescriptions of Authority are, or, in the Refult of his private Judgment, appear contrary to any Law of the Gospel, he will be bound in Conscience to refuse an active Compliance with them. But if no Law of the Gospel requires him in his Station publickly to oppose them, and endeavour to render others who approve them diffatisfy'd with them. He may fafely let this alone, without any Apprehension of Sin; for where there is no Law, there is no Transgression: And whatever he may omit without Sin, he cannot be oblig'd in Conscience to do. And I continue to think the Rule of the Apostle-d Hast thou Faith? Have it to thy felf before God-may justly be extended to this Cafe. 'Tis frivolous in the E Letter Writer to con-

b Phil. 3. 16. c 1 Cor. 1. 10. d Rom. 14. 22. c Pag. 52.

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fine it purely to the Subject to which it is apply'd by the Apostle. For every Rule will be applicable to all Cases. which are within the Reasons of it. He knows very well, that the Case of eating or not eating Things offer'd to Idols, has been refer'd to in numberless Difputes on other Subjects; and fo far as a Parity of Reason can be proved, the Argument is just in Logick, and has been allow'd by all Christians. But if an Argument from Parity of Reason may be deduced from this Case, it must be deduced from the Rule given in Decision of it; for thence only can any Conclufion arise, for the Decision of another Case: And consequently this Rule must be applicable to any other Case, where the Argument can be supported by a Parity of Reason. Now this Rule is given by the Apostle, both to those who did not eat, and to those who did eat. Each are directed by it to content themfelves with acting according to their own Persuasion or Conscience, and not think themselves obliged to censure or correct the Persuasions of others, but leave them

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to act according to their own Convictions. If this Rule be good in this Cafe, it will hold a Fortiori in my Application of it. If when one Christian, only from the Collections of his own private Judgment, thinks an Action lawful, another private Christian, who thinks it unlawful, is under no Obligation to endeavour to reform his supposed Error, and perfuade him to think it unlawful; much less will he be obliged to this Conduct. when the Action is not only approv'd by his Neighbour, but esteem'd a Duty, and enjoyn'd by proper Authority. not oblig'd thus to interpole in the Direction of his Equals, he is still less oblig'd to do it to his Superiors; but least of all can he be obliged to do it by publick Acts of Opposition to the Rules, and Authority of the Society. And if in the one Cafe it is his Duty to have his Persuasion to bimself before God, it will be much more his Duty to do fo in the other f.

f My Correspondent's Suggestion (Letter p. 52.) that in my Application of the foresaid Rule, I had a Prospect of qualifying my self for the Popedom, is so exceeding ingenious, that I cannot find in my Heart to contradict it.

A act according to their own Convict

But with Respect to those who are without, not converted to the Church, nor Members of it, Private Christians are under no Obligation that I know of to take upon them the Office of Apostles, or Publick Preachers to them. None can be either authorized, or bound to this Office, 8 except he be sent. Neither is every Person, who is call'd to the Ministry in any Church, obliged thus publickly to labour the Conversion of those without, unless he has a special Mission to that If it be a general Duty of every Christian, or even every Clergy-man, to undertake by publick Applications the Conversion of all Infidels, or the Reformation of all Christian Churches which he thinks in Error, what will become of the Gentlemen residing in our Factories in Italy or Turkey, or those of our Clergy who officiate to them? The one will have a fad Account to give of their Christianity, and the other of their Ministry. If this be really a general Duty of their Religion

or Office, no fecular Confiderations of Fear or Interest can dispense with the Performance of it. Conscience will oblige to a general Duty, as well in Italy or Turkey, as in England; and if this be not a Duty in one Place, it will be hard to prove it a Duty in the other. I prefume the Gentlemen imploy'd in those foreign Stations, have never had the least Apprehension, that they were oblig'd in Conscience thus publickly to oppose and dispute against the established Religions of those Countries. They have satisfy'd themselves, and very reasonably may do fo, with exercifing their own Religion. within the Privileges indulged them, and been thankful for the Liberty of doing it. I am far from disapproving the same or any other Measures of Indulgence to different Professions among our selves, that may confift with publick Safety, and establish'd Rights: But I presume, the Perfons fo favour'd are as much obliged to keep within the Limits of that Indulgence, as the Gentlemen officiating in those foreign Services are within theirs. And am inclined to think, that if the most zealous

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zealous Opposers of the imagin'd Errors of our Establishment were in their Places, they wou'd find themselves under no Obligation of Conscience, in the same publick Manner to oppose the establish'd Errors of those Countries; but if they wou'd decline this Conduct there, I see not upon what Principles they can pretend Conscience for it here.

But least of all can any general Obligation of Conscience be pretended, for publickly opposing or disputing the Right of the Magistrate, to establish the present or any other Religion. He who denies his Right to establish any Religion, does in effect deny his Right to provide for publick Happiness, and may as reasonably deny his Right to establish Justice, Temperance, or Charity, by Law; fince Religion is as necessary to the Welfare of Society, as moral Virtue; and the only rational Obligation of Conscience to the one, must be deriv'd from the other. And fince Religion is no otherwise capable of being provided for by Law, but by the Establishment of some Religion, 'tis his

his Duty, and consequently his Right to establish some; and if 'tis his Duty to establish some Religion, it must be his Right to establish such as in his own Convictions he approves; and what is one Man's Right, another Man's Conscience cannot oblige him, upon any just Grounds, to oppose. Between this Case and those before consider'd I make a very wide Difference; For tho' I cannot, as I have faid, perceive any general Principles of Morality or Religion, that can oblige a private Man publickly to oppose whatever he thinks erroneous in an Establishment, yet I can eafily imagine, that fome Principles of either may be so mistaken, that he may apprehend himself obliged thus to oppose either the Whole or some Part of a particular Establishment. But no Principle can be imagin'd, which, under any Appearances, cou'd lead a rational Man to think himself oblig'd, to oppose all Establishment of any Religion. An Error in the former Case may be entitled to Compassion, and, where publick Safety will admit it, to some Indulgence; but the Publication of fuch a Scheme as this, fo affron-

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affrontive to the necessary Rights of Civil Power, and so ruinous in its Consequences to human Society, can offer no Motive even to Pity, but a Presumption of Madness and Distraction in the Author of it.

SECT. VIII.

What special Obligations of Conscience any Man may have, publickly to oppose an Established Religion; and how far the Magistrate is bound to regard that Plea.

THO' I deny that there is any general Law, or Rule of Conscience obliging Men thus to oppose an establish'd Religion which they think erroneous, yet I acknowledge there may be Cases of special Obligation so to do.

Ist, God may by a special Call or Mission, require any Man or Number of Men publickly to oppose an establish'd Religion; and whenever he does so, such Persons are oblig'd in Conscience to obey

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bey that Command. But then the Magistrate is no farther oblig'd to regard a Plea of fuch Mission, than the Evidences of it appear to him. If the Evidences offer'd for it, are in their Nature sufficient to convince any reasonable Man, it is certainly his Duty to allow their Force. If he is convinced by them, he is then oblig'd not only to permit, but to encourage Obedience to a divine Command fo prov'd: But if he is not convinc'd. the Plea of another's Perfualion or Conscience can be no Rule to his. He cannot but consider the Man as mistaken at leaft, if not a feditious Impostor; and is at Liberty either to tolerate or restrain the Action, as the Nature and Tendencies of it appear to advise him. The Man indeed who has, or is perfuaded He has, fuch Command from God, is bound in Conscience to pay an active Obedience to it, whether the Magistrate approves it or not, or whatever temporal Consequences may attend it: He must act according to his own Convictions; but at the same Time the Magistrate must also act according to his, and

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as the Duties of his Office appear to require him.

h THE Case of Christ and his Apostles, is constantly, but furely most impertinently, urged in this Question. They publickly preach'd the Gospel, and gather'd Churches of their Converts, in Opposition to the Commands of Authority, and the Religions then establish'd; They did so; and so ought every one to do, who has the fame special Call and Commission that they had. They give us the Principle they acted on- That they ought to i obey God, rather than This will ever be confess'd a facred, undoubted Truth. And I will admit that if any other Persons are fully perfuaded, that they have the fame fpecial Mission and Command that the Apostles had, they will be obliged in Conscience to act as they did. But what is this to the Magistrate? Or how does their Persuasion alter his Duty, unless it appears to him really founded on a di-

t Lett. p. 51. Mr. C. Pref. p. 23. 1 Act. 4. 19.

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vine Command? Is he obliged to revoke his Establishment of a Religion, in which he fees no Fault, in Obedience to a Meffage from God, for which he sees no Proof? Or must he permit Men to embroil his Kingdom by Factions at Home, or expose it to Attempts of Enemies from Abroad, merely because they are persuaded they ought to do so? Had Christ and his Apostles had no special Call or Commission from God, the Jewish Rulers might justly have inflicted on them fuch Penalties, as the Mosaick Law denounces against Opposers of it. Had they not produced sufficient Proofs of fuch Commission, they might justly have been consider'd as having no such Commission. And agreeably our Lord determines That - if k be had not done among them the Works which no other Man did, they had not had Sin. This indeed was the Rulers Crime, they were not convinced when fufficient Evidence lay before them. They did not duly attend to those Demonstrations

k John 15: 24.

of the Spirit and Power, which attested the Commission of Christ and his Apostles. They shut their Eyes a-gainst the Light, and harden'd their Hearts against Conviction. But suppose Christ and his Apostles had not produc'd those Evidences of their Mission, but only profes'd themselves fully persuaded in their own Mind that they were fent by God, and bound in Duty to him to preach publickly the Necessity of abrogating the ceremonial Law, and fubftituting the Gospel Faith and Worship in the Place of it: Could the Tewish Rulers have had Reason to consider them in any other View, than either as deluded Enthusiasts, or as factious and seditious Deceivers of the People? And had they not been even obliged to treat them. as the Law required Persons of those Characters to be treated? If the bare Affeveration of a divine Mission was allow'd to excuse any Person from Cenfure for opposing the Law, an Exception fo perfectly in every one's Power must eventually have annull'd the Law, and

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and render'd it of no Force or Effect at all, in the Restraint of any Offender.

THE Heathen Magistrate was as much bound to permit any Persons sent by God to execute his Commands, as the Jewish; and He ought in Reason, to have attended to and acknowledg'd the clear Evidences, offer'd by the Apostles in Proof of their Mission. But if they had produced none, or infufficient Evidences of their Mission, their bare Profession of it could have had no reasonable Weight with him: Whether he should indulge or reftrain their acting according to their Perfuasion, would not depend on the Authority or Obligation of a Mission for which he saw no Proof. but on his Judgment of the Civil Tendency of their Actions. If their Actions were harmless, inoffensive, and not injurious to any one; whether he believed their Mission or not, he might safely tolerate them; but if they appear'd of a contrary Character, the Duty of his Office would oblige him to restrain them. For the Execution of his Office, is a Du-L 2

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ty He wou'd owe to God and the Community: And tho' an express Signification of the Divine Will, wou'd fuperfede that general Obligation, yet if no Proof were given him of fuch special Declaration of the Divine Will, that general Obligation wou'd stand in Force, and bind him in Conscience to execute his Office in the Restraint of such Actions. as appear'd dangerous to the Peace, &c. of the Community. The Injustice then, both of the Heathen and Jewish Rulers to the Apostles, consisted chiefly in this. that they restrain'd them from executing a Divine Command and Mission, for which they offer'd fufficient Proofs. And if any one shall produce as good Evidences of a special Mission from God as they did, it will be equally an Injuftice in the Magistrate, and a Violence on Conscience, to restrain him from fulfilling it. But if he produces no other Evidence of his Mission but his own Persuasion, his Case is widely different from that of the Apostles, nor will any Conclusion hold from the one to the other. His Persuasion may oblige himfelf,

felf, but cannot alter the Magistrate's Rule. So that a special Command of God himself, requiring any Person publickly to oppose an establish'd Religion. no farther obliges the Magistrate to encourage or permit fuch Opposition, than the Pretense of it is supported by good Evidences. If upon Examination fuch Support is wanting, the Pretense of a divine Mission, and all Obligation of Conscience arising from it, must go for nothing. And the Issue of the Question. whether the Magistrate shou'd permit fuch Opposition or not, will rest wholly on its Civil Tendencies. If He apprehends no evil Confequence to the Publick from it, he may indulge or tolerate it; but if he apprehends the Peace, &c. of the Community to be endanger'd by it, He may restrain it under the same Kind and Measure of Penalties, which may justly be affix'd to any other Action of the fame Danger.

I add only on this Head, that a Pretense of Conscience for opposing the Right of the Magistrate to establish any L 2 Reli-

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Religion at all, cannot be supported by the Plea of a special Mission from God: Because a Doctrine so absurd, and destructive to human Society, Reason cannot admit to be from God. And He who pretends to come from God with such a Message, brings with him such an internal Disproof of his Mission, as wou'd overrule any outward Proofs of it: And He may as well pretend a Revelation, requiring him to tell us there is no God.

Conscience publickly to oppose an establish'd Religion, may be derived on any Person, by a Mission from those who have receiv'd Authority from God to send others on such a Service. As God may by an immediate Mission send any Man or Number of Men on such a Message, so He may if He pleases authorise and require them, and make it part of their Instructions to send others, with a Power also to transmit the same Authority to any Man or Order of Men, in Succession from them. And whoever owns

owns this Authority as ultimately derived from God, and has receiv'd fuch Miffion from it, will be oblig'd in Confcience towards God to discharge it.

there and no be been God what said In the Christian Church, this Power was manifeftly a Part of the Apostles Commission. They not only publickly preach'd and oppos'd the establish'd Religions of the World themselves, but fent others by special Mission to do the fame. We find also this Authority of specially appointing Persons to this Service, exercised by the Church or Christian Society, and submitted to even by the Apostles themselves. Thus the distinct Provinces - That some shou'd 1 go to the Circumcision, and others to the Gentiles, were allotted them by Appointment of the Church. And thus the particular Church of m Antioch folemnly design'd Paul and Barnabas to fpecial Missions. It appears from these Instances, that the Apostles themselves. tho' they had a general Commission to

¹ Gal. 2. 9. m Att. 13.

go and teach all Nations, yet observed the publick Defignations of the Church in the Discharge of it. And tho' Paul and Barnabas were before both Ministers and Apostles, yet they were directed by the Holy Ghost to take with them that folemn Separation and Appointment of the Church of Antioch by Imposition of Hands and Prayer, to a special Mission. And I remember an ingenious Gentleman, with whom I had formerly the Misfortune to be engaged in Dispute, very earnestly contends That that Rule of St. Paul ___ n How can they preach, except they be fent? ought to be understood only of such special Missions. I may therefore presume on that worthy Person's Agreement with me in this Conclusion at least, That the ordinary Call to the Ministry does not imply either an Authority, or Obligation to go on fuch particular Errands of Conversion, unless a special and particular Mission be superadded to it. Every Christian Church I conceive to have

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Authority to fend its own Members on fuch special Missions, and they who are employ'd in this Office under fuch Miffions, may very justly think themselves obliged in Conscience to fulfil them. On these Principles, our Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and those R. R. Prelates with whose Affistance and Direction that pious Work is carry'd on, are justify'd in fending Missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Indians. and those worthy Persons who are fent in doing it. If the Permission of the Civil Magistrate, in the Places they are fent to, can be obtain'd, it will certainly facilitate the Success of the Mission, and may therefore reasonably be defired: But this is only of prudential Consideration. Both the Authority of the Senders, and the Obligation of the fent, will be the fame, whether fuch Magistrate approves the Mission or not. The Persons who under fuch a special Mission, have undertaken this Service, will be obliged to preach, &c. and do the Errand they are fent on, so far as they are able, what Difficulties foever may attend it. But the

the Magistrate can be no farther obliged to regard their Plea of Conscience so to act, than the Grounds of it appear to him. Till they can fatisfy Him that they are fent by Persons, who really have an Authority derived from God to fend them on this Service, the Plea of their Mission and the Obligations of it can fignify nothing to him. If their Doctrines appear innocent, neither injurious to himself nor his People, He may reafonably permit them to be preach'd. And as the Christian Doctrines are of this Character, they may on that account be faid to have a Right to fuch Permission. But this Right must in the Nature of the Thing be submitted to the Judgment of the Magistrate, and if in the Result of his Judgment He apprehends either their Doctrines, or their Conduct in publishing them to be dangerous to the Civil Peace, or Interests of the Community. He will be obliged to act according to fuch Persuasion. Mr. . Chandler has some very confused Reflections on this Sub-

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[·] Pref. p. 51, 52.

an Instance of special. He consounds Obligation with Right, and accordingly with his usual Liberty, instead of general Obligation, which were my Words in the Passage He cites, He substitutes Right, and for special Call, He puts Call of the Magistrate. In short, He appears not to see any one Point of the Question in its true Light: But He goes on so pleasantly in the Dark, and seems so delighted with his own Bussoneries on this Occasion, that 'tis pity to interrupt him. A

3d, CASE of special Obligation to oppose an establish'd Religion, I allow to be when any Person who, by the Constitution of a Community, has a Share in the Legislature, thinks the establish'd Religion salse, or the Terms of the Establishment unjust. He has a Right within the Compass and Rules of his Station, to propose and advise the Repeal or Alteration of any Law, with his Reasons for it, and is under an Obligation of Conscience to act honestly, and according to

the best of his Judgment, in the Discharge of his Trust: And therefore where he has these Persuasions of an establish'd Religion, He may reasonably think it a Duty of his Station to propose the Repeal of it: But this Obligation will not carry him one Jot beyond that Station. Within the Limits of his Share in the Legislature, He has the same Liberty of Examination, Debate and Resolution in this Question, which I before afferted to the Magistrate, or whole Legislature; and is equally bound to act according to the Refult of his own Convictions. But out of the Compass of that Station, He is purely a private Man, and under the common Obligation of other Subjects, to fludy to be quiet and do his own Bufiness. The publick Business indeed is his own in his publick Character, but not in his private; neither will the Duties of the one oblige him in the other-Where a Conftitution allows private Subjects to petition for the Repeal, or Correction of fuch Laws as they disapprove, and fuch Liberty extends to Laws concerning Religion, He who has, or appre-

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apprehends he has, just Objections to the establish'd Religion, may also, within the Rules prescrib'd to such Applications, represent them to the Legislature, and esteem it his Duty fo to do. But an Obligation arifing from this Liberty, can reach no further than the Rules prescribed to it: And therefore when either of these Perfons have, within the Boundaries of their Character, and the legal Rules of their Conduct, born their Testimony against the supposed Errors, or Unjustice of an Establishment, they have done all that the Duties of their Stations can oblige them to; and must be content to leave the Decision of the Question, whether the Establishment should be continued or not, where the Nature of Society leaves it, to the Refolutions of publick Authority.

In fum, That there is any General Rule of Conscience obliging all Men, all Christians, or even all Clergymen, publickly to oppose an establish'd Religion, which they think salse, I deny; I admit there may be special Obligations to

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do this, and have confider'd the Extent of them, and how far the Magistrate is obliged to regard a Plea of Conscience under them. I presume, no Liberties of this kind which I have ever cenfur'd, will be protected under any of these special Pleas: And if no Man can be bound to take them, either by any general or special Obligation of Conscience, it is manifest, that no Liberty due to Conscience, can be taken away by the Restraint of them. But if any one thinks himself oblig'd in Conscience, by any general or special Rule of Duty, to these or any other Acts of publick Opposition to an Establishment, his Perfuasion may oblige him so to act: But if the Magistrate perceives no just Grounds for fuch Persuasion, he owes no Indulgence at all to it; but the Rule of his Conduct must arise from the Civil Tendency of the Action, and he may either permit or restrain it, as its Influence on the Civil Peace, &c. of Community Thall advise. And therefore shou'd I appear mistaken (as I do not perceive I am) in affigning the Rules, in Application of which, any one may apprehend a general

or special Obligation to oppose an Establishment, yet the Issue of the Question with Respect to the Magistrate's Conduct will stand unaffected: For whatever Tenderness a Persuasion of Conscience may plead for where the Action is inoffenfive: vet where the great Interests of Society are manifestly endanger'd by it, the Persuasion of the Offender, whether real or pretended, will not protect it from Cenfure and Restraint. I have observed in my Preface, by how many aggravating Circumstances, both with Regard to the Principle and Effects of the Action, the prefent Attempts of the Deist are distinguish'd from all other Oppositions to our Establishment; and that the same Motives which may fometimes advise Lenity to others, cannot with any Parity or even Shadow of Reason be apply'd to them.

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SECT. IX.

Some Objections to the Positions I have afferted on this Subject consider'd.

La Have endeavour'd to support my Conclusions, on this Subject, by a Deduction from simple Principles, whose Truth I think no reasonable Man can dispute. If I have succeeded in these Proofs, the Conclusion will stand, tho' some Difficulties may be suggested, whose Solution does not presently appear. But because I wou'd leave as little Room as possible for Cavil, I will consider such as have occur'd to me, and endeavour to vindicate my Positions from them.

as Ido, the final Determination what Religion shall be established to the Resolutions of the Magistrate, I put all Religion as Established, salse as well as true, on the same Foot; equally intitle them to publick Favour, and to Protection from publick Opposition. All this I acknowledge, and can perceive no Absurdity or Inconveni-

ence to my Argument from it. The Establishment of any Religion is purely an Act of Civil Power, and the Determination of that A& must be left, where the Nature of Society lodges that Power-The Magistrate has the same Obligation of Conscience, to act according to his Convictions of Duty in the Exercise of this Power, that any private Man has in discharging the Duties of his Station. If by a Right of private Judgment, we mean a Right to deliberate upon Questions of Duty, he has the same Right that other Men have. If we mean a legal Right to act according to fuch Judgment without Controul, he has a much greater; for having no Civil Superior, he can be under no Civil Controul; but every Subject's outward Actions must be under the Controul of his proper Superiors, to be allowed or restrain'd according to their Civil Tendency, whatever his Persuasions may be concerning them. To the Magistrate then, or Supreme Civil Power, it must be left to establish such Religion, as in the Result of his own Inquiries he approves: His Resolution cannot depend on the Truth. M

Truth, or Falshood of the Religion in its self, but on his Perceptions or Apprehensions of either. The Magistrate in Turkey has just the same uncontrous Civil Right to establish the Religion he approves, as a Christian Magistrate has to establish his Choice: Christianity made no Alteration in this Case, but left Civil Power as it found it; and if it was before the Judge what Religion it shou'd establish, it continues so still.

AND as I affert the Magistrate's Right, to establish such Religion as in his own Convictions he approves, so I also acknowledge his Right, upon the same Motives and Convictions to revoke or alter an Establishment; and in this Point I agree with the p Letter-writer; for the Magistrate may limit himself by Oaths, &c. to continue the Establishment of some particular Religion, yet these Oaths, &c. bind no longer, when he comes to perceive that Religion to be salse, and the Establishment of it displea-

P Lett. p. 10.

ling to God; for then to continue it. would be a moral Evil, to which no Oath can bind. Where the Legislative Power is distributed into several Hands, whether with equal or subordinate Allotments. the Tenure of each Share must be subject to the Resolutions of the whole, and confequently capable of being limited by certain legal Conditions and Restrictions. And the Profession, Encouragement, &c. of some particular Religion approv'd by the Whole, may as well be the Condition of fuch Tenure, as of any other Office of Trust and Confidence in the Society; But still these Limitations themselves must be subject to the Revisal, Alteration, or Repeal of the whole Legislature: Neither is it possible by any legal Provisions fo to bind and restrain the Supreme Civil Authority in its ultimate Refort, but that there must remain with it, the same Power to recall or alter an Establishment, that there was to enact it. Human Legislators indeed are fallible even in their last Conclusions, and may establish a false Religion; and when they have fo done that Religion will thereby be entitled to M 2 all

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all the Favour, Encouragement, and Protection that the Nature of an Establishment implies. And the Rules of the Magistrate's Conduct towards a true Religion, when it appears false, must be the fame as if it was really false. He cannot be obliged to recommend or encourage it, and may either permit or restrain the publick Profession of it, as the Civil Duties of his own Office appear to advise. Inconveniences no doubt may arise from the Mistakes of the Magistrate in the exercise of these Powers; neither can I conceive any Power committed to Men. but what will be liable to the same Objection: But if we admit any Establishment of Religion, we must be content to receive it from the Civil Magistrate, in whose fole Power it is, subject to such Inconveniences as may arise from his Mistakes: And the Scheme which excludes him from the Establishment of any, will be found attended with infinitely greater. Well, but

2dly, I F a false Religion happens to be establish'd, as we acknowledge it may may be, must it always continue so? It must, till they who have Authority to repeal the Law, are convinc'd that such Religion is salse, and ought not to be establish'd. This is plainly an Act of Legislation, and can belong only to the Supreme Civil Power, or Magistrate, and must, as I have said, wait on his Convictions. But,

3dly, IF no Body must be permitted publickly to oppose it, to dispute, publish Books against the Establishment, How shall the Magistrate be convinced of his Error in it? I answer, just the fame Way that any other Man is convinc'd of any Error in his Conduct; and as they who are so impatient to inform him, were themselves convinced. I suppose they were convinced of his Error, before they publish'd their Books in Refutation of it. He has the same Liberty to examine, and enquire that they had. And they who prefume every Man capable of forming a true Judgment of his Duty, will not, I hope, deny this Capacity to the Magistrate. His Case M 3 thefe-

therefore is no more desperate than theirs And as his Errors are of more Consequence than other Mens, there are, in every Kind of Government, greater Provisions for the Correction of his Errors, than can be made for the Correction of private Mens. Where the Legiflature is fhar'd among many Persons, each of these has full Liberty to propose the Repeal of any inconvenient or unjust Law: And where the supreme Power is in one Hand, every Prince has his felect Council, chosen with a Presumption of their fuperior Wisdom, Knowledge, and Capacities, to advise him, and under all the Obligations that can be laid on Men to act faithfully, and according to their Judgment and Conscience. And where Access to the Prince by Petition is allow'd to private Subjects, they may, within the Rules of that Liberty, reprefent to him any Error in the publick Constitution. Error indeed may make its Way, or where it has obtain'd already, stand its Ground, notwithstanding all these Guards and Checks upon it: But I cannot conceive how any other Civil ProProvision can be made against it, confiftent with any Order in the Community. If every private Subject must have a Liberty to assume the Office of a Senator or Privy Counsellor, whenever he pleafes, the Confequence would foon be felt in the Confusion of the Society. Neither Reason nor Conscience can oblige the Magistrate to go farther, in general Provisions to secure himself from Error, than to have always by him, either a publick Senate, or a select Council of the most distinguish'd Abilities in his Dominions, oblig'd by their Office to direct him in his Conclusions of Government. and represent to him any Mistakes: And to have a regular Door, by which the Advice of any private Subject may approach him. Whatever Error escapes thro' these Provisions, must be left to the Correction of God, in whose Hands are the Hearts of Princes: Who can either direct them by the Illuminations of his Spirit, or by a special Mission of other Persons declare his Will to them; but furely we cannot, by any Civil Provisi-M 4

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ons, oblige him to do either the one or the other.

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But because this Part of the Question has been thought, by Persons whose Understanding I much esteem, to have more Difficulty in it, than I can perceive: I will consider it more distinctly.

IT is fupposed, that an erroneous Religion is establish'd. It is also to be fupposed, that the Magistrate in establishing it acted as a reasonable and honest Man, upon Convictions form'd with Care and Attention, and the best Information he could take. He happens indeed to be mistaken in the Result; but he cannot in these Circumstances consider himself as mistaken, tho' under a Poffibility of being fo. But, in his prefent Convictions, he firmly believes what he establishes, and that 'tis his Duty to establish it; and therefore in debating what publick Opposition to this Establishment he should permit, the Queftion before him will not be how far he fhould permit establish'd Error to be opposed.

posed, but how far he should permit establish'd Truth to be opposed. And the proper Question before us, is whether the Possibility of his being mistaken by a Reason which will advise or oblige him, for his own farther Information, to permit every one, who has a Mind to it, publickly to dispute and oppose a Religion which he sirmly believes to be true, and what he ought to establish.

Now, if when he establish'd that Religion he examin'd it with fuch Care, &c. as is supposed, and was in the Refult fully convinced of the Truth of it. I presume he may reasonably rest in that Conviction. For the only rational End of Inquiry is to find Truth. When Truth is found, 'tis certainly a Duty to adhere to it. If Religion be a Subject in which 'tis impossible to find Truth. all Inquiries about it are to no Purpose. and only fruitless Amusements of Time: And these Gentlemen, who are so solicitous to be heard upon it, may as well keep their Speculations to themselves. If the whole End and Business, indeed,

of Religion were only to dispute about it, these Persons might be of some Use: But when we consider it as a Rule of Action, 'tis most reasonable to come to fome Determination, and not fquander away Life in Suspense and Irresolution. This indeed is the proper State of Deifm. which has no fixt Rule, offers no determinate Scheme of Religion: But as foon as a divine Revelation is admitted. the Authority of God fixes the Choice. and puts an End to the Inquiry. The Magistrate 'tis confess'd may mistake in judging of a Revelation; but when, with such Attention and Affistances as are in his Power, he has purfued the Search till he has no Scruple or Doubt remaining, he may reafonably give it over, and proceed to act according to his Convictions. And if there be no Reason for him to inquire any farther, there can be none to permit publick Disputes for his farther Information. If after he has refolv'd, any Doubt arises in his own Mind of the Truth of the Religion establish'd, or the Equity of the Establishment, he has the same Right, and is under marla

under the same Direction of Reason to call the Question over again, and proceed with the fame Care and Attention as at first: But when his Doubts are fatisfied, 'tis altogether as reasonable for him to put an End to the Search, and be at Reft. If any Person comes with a Profession of being sent by God to require the Submission of Men to some other Religion, or to fome Alteration in that before receiv'd, 'tis very reafor nable to attend to him, fo far as to examine the Evidences of his Mission: because God has certainly an Authority to direct his own Service: But when he has with the fame Care examin'd the Evidences of fuch Mission, whether he approves or rejects it, he may reafor nably fit down fatisfied with his Conclusion - Or if any Persons, who by Station and Office are appointed to advife him, and admonish him of his Errors, suggest to him a Mistake in the Establishment of Religion, 'tis very reasonable for him to hear them; because otherwise he renders their Appointment of no Use to him; but when he has heard them,

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them, he must resolve for himself upon his own Convictions.

I would ask these Gentlemen, who are so very importunate to inform the Magistrate of his Error in establishing the Christian Religion, what End they propose in it. I suppose 'tis to convince him that 'tis false, that the Establishment of it is unjust, and ought to be revoked. But hold a little: He has not yet read all the Books that treat this Argument, nor heard Half the People who have fomething to fay upon it, and have as good a Right to be heard as they have. They will not, I hope, require him to depart from his present Persuasions, till he is convinced of his Mistake in them: And he cannot, upon their Principles, have a rational Conviction and Rest in his Conclusion, till he has heard, and carefully examin'd, not only all that has been faid or can be faid at present, but he must wait to see whether some Body or other will not come forth with fome new Informations of his Reason, to whom he must always be be at Leisure to attend, and never be fatisfy'd with his Conclusion, till all the World is weary of disputing with him. Suppose He is convinced by their Arguments, may He then put an End to the Dispute and be at quiet? If He may rest in the Conclusions they offer Him. why not in his present? He is as fully persuaded in his present as He can be in theirs: If He may not rest in his present. till He has heard all that can be fuggefted against them; He must admit theirs upon the same Terms, i. e. He must not admit theirs till He has heard all that can be offered against them: And since there is just the same Reason, for his not departing from a Conclusion till he has heard all that can be faid for it, as for his not admitting a Conclusion till he has heard all that can be faid against it, his present Persuasion must remain in Possession. till the Dispute can be ended upon these Terms. And if the present State of Things is to continue till then, it will last as long as any one can desire it.

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But perhaps this Scheme is not inrended fo much for the Service of the Magistrate, as the People. " They may " have Scruples and Doubts, and want "Information the He does not: And "'tis very reasonable that He shou'd " both permit such a Liberty of Inquiry, " as is necessary to their Satisfaction ! " and permit others to inform them." Very reasonable no Doubt: But I can imagine no Reason, why He shou'd permit any one, to make it his Bufiness to fill the Minds of his People with as many Doubts and Scruples as he can. I know no Obligation any Man, who is rationally fatisfy'd already, has to feek Doubes and Scruples; neither can I perceive that they are Things very defirable either to the Magistrate or People. But fuel Things unavoidably will be, and I acknowledge it very reasonable for the Magistrate to make the best Provision he can for the Satisfaction of them: And therefore not only to appoint Perfons, qualified under as good Rules as He can in Prudence devise, for the Recourfe ment

course of all Men in fuch Cases, but alto to allow them to confult whom elfe they please, in all Ways that can in Reafon be esteemed necessary for any one's private Satisfaction. But to admit the Scheme of everlasting Disputation for this purpose, no Reason can require or advise. For can any Rule of Conscience or Duty be prefumed to oblige any Man. not to be fatisfy'd till he has publish'd his Doubts and Scruples to all the World, and taken the Opinion of all Mankind upon them? Or can a Regard to the Doubts and Scruples of his Subjects oblige the Magistrare, to permit any one publickly to teach them, that they ought never to be fatisfy'd, but go on inquiring and disputing for ever? Surely a Project to inconsistent with the Peace of Society, with the Acknowledge ment of a divine Revelation, and with the Attendance due to the common Business and Affairs of Life needs not any farther Refutation. But

4thly, "UNLESS we admit private "Subjects, convinced in their own Judg- "ment

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"ment of the Errors or Injustice of an Establishment, publickly to oppose it, how shall we vindicate the Refor"mers who, some of them at least, publickly preach'd and wrote against establish'd Popery, in Contradiction to the Commands of Civil Authority."

I answer,

If, THAT Examples, where the Principles and Rules they acted under do not appear, are a very imperfect Proof of Right or Duty. My Adversaries, at least, will not dispute this Point with me, who will in no Case allow one Man's Judgment to be a Rule to another's.

2d, BE the Weight of this Objection more or less, it does not affect our Reformation: For whatever was done in other Places, I have the Letter Writer's Authority, that ours was introduced without Opposition to Civil Authority, the Point in present Consideration, for He tells us, it was introduced a intirely by it.

⁹ Lett. p. 6.

any Principles : Which I think a full

3. The present Cause of the Reformation, here or any where elfe, does not depend on the Regularity or Irregularity of the Methods by which it was introduced. The Question now before us is, whether we are in Possession of Truth, and not how we came by it. Truth is Truth, and will equally oblige Adherence to it, however we came to the Knowledge of it. Shou'd the worst Man that ever was, even while he was committing the world Action, offer a Proposition to me with clear Proofs of its Truth, neither the Character of the Man nor of the Action wou'd in the least withold my Assent to it: Neither wou'd my Affent to fuch Truth oblige me to vindicate the Man, or the Action.

I offer not these Restections in Reproach or Condemnation of any of the Resormers, but only to shew, that admitting all that the Objection alledges, viz. That some of their Actions cannot be justify'd upon my Principles, yet, this will not oblige me to recede from

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my Principles: Which I think a full Reply to it. For this Objection, when reduced to any Rule of Logick, is an Argument ab absurdo : And can conclude, only by shewing that in Confequence of my Principles I must acknowledge fomething which I cannot without manifest Absurdity acknowledge. If therefore I have shewn, that admitting what the Objection suggests, viz. That some of the Reformers acted in Contradiction to my Principles, yet this will not oblige me to affirm any Thing which as a Christian, a Protestant, or a Protestant of this Church I am bound to deny, or deny any Thing which these Characters require me to affirm, the Objection is perfectly discharged: And indeed more effectually, than it cou'd be by disproving the Allegation of Fact.

But tho' I do not think my Argument concern'd in it, yet as an Act of Charity, and Justice to the Memory of those worthy Persons who were Instruments in the Hand of God in bringing Light into the World, I profess my self to esteem

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esteem them very Honest, and some of them very great Men. And, tho' I will not undertake for every particular Action of all of them, yet I think their Conduct generally defenfible upon my Principles. They were fometimes required by Authority to give a publick Account of their Faith and Doctrines, in which Case it was their Duty to make an honeft, open, undiffembled Profession of their Sentiments, and support them with the best Reasons they cou'd. Princes might, as they fometimes did, fend for them to hear their Doctrine, and, upon their own Approbation of it, allow them by preaching or writing to teach their Subjects. They might have an immediate Call from God, or be perfuaded they had; which Perfuafion wou'd oblige them in Conscience to act according to it, and vindicate their Character as honest Men. They wou'd act, in that Case, under a Rule in its Nature of Superior Obligation to any Commands of Human Authority; and we are not concern'd to prove them infallible in the Application of it. But nevertheless, this gave them no Right N 2

to a Permission from the Magistrate so to act. That depended on his Conviction, and not on theirs: And if he was fully persuaded that the Civil Duties of his Office required him to restrain them, He was as much obliged in Conscience to act according to his Persuasion, as they were to act according to theirs.

mother to the real state of state of their

5thly. Some prudential Reasons have been suggested for the Liberty of Disputation contended for. Particularly, that tis the proper Means to find and establish Truth. But with Respect to the Magistrate, if he is fully perfuaded that He has found Truth already, He has no Occasion for their Disputations to inform him farther. But suppose him to doubt, and in Consequence of these Disputations to find Truth: What is He to do with it when he has found it? Why, in order to establish it, the Dispute must be carried on. and all the Errors that' can be imagin'd must be publickly taught in Opposition to it. A strange Expedient methinks for the Promotion of Truth and the Prevention of Error. We have happily freed freed our felves, e.g. from the Errors of Popery; and the Way, it feems, by which we are to prevent their Return and overspreading the Nation again, is to invite all the Emissaries we can get, publickly to preach and inculcate them to the People. St. Augustin indeed has observed, that God Almighty fometimes permits Hereticks to arife, that on Occasion of them the Truth may be more accurately confider'd and clear'd. God who is able to bring good out of Evil may do this, but the Scheme feems not adapted to the Counsels of Men, who have not the same Power to conduct it. St. Paul to the same purpose says, There must be Heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest. But will any Christian thence infer, that 'tis the Duty of the Church or State to promote Herefies all they can? The Argument is of just the same Size with this-Treasons and Rebellions sometimes in their Effects confirm and strengthen Civil Governments, therefore 'tis the Inte-

r 1 Cor. 11. 19.

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rest of all Civil Governments to permit and encourage Traitors and Rebels.

department she shall be confident to the state of

But 6thly, "Unless this Liberty
" of Controversy be allow'd, Learning
" will decay, and the Literati grow idle
" and ignorant. I answer,

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adly, IF all Men were to be employ'd in Disputes about Religion, other Inquiries must, in Proportion to their Attendance on this, lie neglected and unimproved.

allow'd to this Objection, it must be defined what is meant by Learning: For, in my humble Opinion, if a great deal of what is sometimes call'd Learning, were not only decay'd but utterly lost, the

the Books burnt, and no Man suffer'd to republish one Line that is in them, All that deserves the Name of Learning wou'd be in a better Condition than it is. But suppose Learning, whatever is meant by it, to receive some Improvements from these Contests, yet if Profaneness, Irreligion, and Scepticism are equally advanced by them, the Publick will be no great Gainer.

"Lastly, It is suggested, That unless the Liberty contended for be indulged, a Zeal without Knowledge, Bigotry, and Superstition will prevail instead of rational Religion.

But in reply to this I observe, that these Vices are a Corruption of Religion, which will in some Instances be found attending it, whilst human Nature has its present Instrmities. If there were no Religion among Men, there wou'd, indeed, be no Bigotry and Superstition: But while there is any Religion in the World, and weak, proud, passionate or melancholy Men in it, there will be some Bigonal

try and Superstition too. Neither do I imagine, that any Liberty of Inquiry or Disputation can intirely cure those Imperfections of Temper and Understanding whence those Vices arise. Let a Man bo as free in his Inquiries, as unconfined by any Rules or Principles as you will, yet unless you can give him an Understanding capable of a regular Pursuit of Truth, He will be as liable to Superstition in his own Conclusions, as he cou'd be in any he received from other Men: And the fame Temperament and Passions that wou'd render him a Bigot to the Opinions he was taught, wou'd render him at least equally so, to those he was fond of as his own Discoveries. There may be altogether as much Superstition in departing from a Rule, as in adhering to it: And I presume as much Bigotry and Superstition may be found among our Sectaries, as among the Members of the established Church. We wish fuch a Remedy cou'd be prescribed, as wou'd free human Nature from these Evils; but fince they equally appear among those who, under a full Liberty of Inquiry, have collected a Rea Religion to themselves, as among those who profess the establish'd Religion, this Liberty does not appear so powerful a Remedy as it pretends to be: And, as to this Essect, all we can expect from it is only a greater Variety of Bigotries and Superstitions.

IF in any Nation all Principles of Religion, or, which is the same thing in Event, all Principles of reveal'd Religion are permitted to be publickly disputed and denyld, the Aversions of vicious Men to the Restraints of Religion may probably gain some real or pretended Converts to fuch Doctrines; Libertines will, at least, become more confident, and, when they are furnish'd with something to fay, be encouraged to more Openness in their Professions: And in the same Proportion that a publick Face of Irreligion prevails, there will be less publick Appearance of Bigotry and Superstition; but I presume, there will be an Appearance of fomething worse in their Place. And look among those who retain Religion, tho' in never fo great a Variety of Professions.

fessions, and you will still find Instances of those Impersections. That an absolute Exclusion from all Means or Liberty of Inquiry will increase them, Iacknowledge; but an unbounded Liberty of disputing every thing, will probably raise more Superstitions than it will cure.

The best Provision that can be made against these Evils, is to allow every Man free Access to the proper Rule of his Duty, with a Liberty, as I have said, to use any Means, take any Advice that can in Reason appear necessary for his private Satisfaction: And since the greater Part of Mankind will want Assistance in the Application of that Rule, to appoint also proper Guides for their ordinary recourse, prepared by Education, and approved by due Trial for that Office, not to lead them blindfold, but to shew them their Way.

To a Christian I may observe, That this is the Provision made by his Religion. As it directs him to search the Scriptures, to sprove all things, and hold fast that

which is good; fo it reminds him that the Pastors and Guides of the Church were appointed that he should not be tos'd to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, They are call'd his Rulers ", and under that Character He is required to obey them. To do x all things without murmuring or disputing, to y avoid profane Bablings, and Oppositions of Science fally The Members of the Christian Church are so far from being call'd to a State of Disputation, that they are exhorted to be, all z perfectly united in the same Mind and the same Judgment; to a avoid those who make Divisions among them; to b walk by the same Rule; to c speak the same things. These Precepts, I confess, are to be understood with a Referve to superior Obligations: But still they enjoin Unanimity in Faith, Doctrine, &c. as far as 'tis possible and lieth in us, and are inconsistent with the pretended Right or Duty of everlasting Disputation. This happy State of Peace and Union in

^{6. 20. 2 1} Cor. 1. 10. 2 Rom. 16. 17. b Philip. 3. 16. 9 1 Cor. 1.

the Church is, indeed, hardly to be hoped for in this World, but 'tis certainly to be wish'd and pray'd for; and yet if it shou'd obtain, Disputation wou'd cease, and all the Inconveniences which are objected on that Supposition, must attend it: But I presume, no Christian will for fear of them expunge these Precepts and Exhortations out of the Scriptures, or pray that they may never be obey'd.

But the Magistrate, in debating whether he should allow this unbounded Liberty of Disputation, or not, has something else to confider besides the Satisfaction of Doubts and Scruples, or the Improvement of Learning, &c. and that is the Effect they may probably have on publick Peace. And how much foever he may be inclined to gratify his Subjects on the former Views, his own Duty and Interests will oblige him to confider them in a Subordination to this. That fuch a Liberty may in fome Circumstances endanger Civil Peace, cannot be denied. Of this Danger the Magiftrate must be Judge; and whatever Liberty

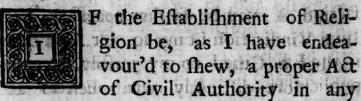
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berty of Controversy these Gentlemen may claim, I presume, they will not dispute his Right to protect himself and his People, from whatever appears to endanger their Civil Happiness.



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Of the Effects and Obligations of a Civil Establishment of Religion.



Community, that Act must be attended with some legal Effects: And the Subjects of that Community must be under some Obligations with Respect to that Religion, which they were not under before. These Effects and Obligations depend on the Nature and Extent of the Magistrate's Power in Matters of Religi-

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on. If, in the foregoing Reflections, I have truly flated and limited the one, I might prefume the other would appear as Confequences from them. And if my former Affertions on this Subject, which have occasion'd me this Trouble. are agreeable to my present Positions, they are sufficiently defended in the Proof of those Positions. But because some Conclusions have been imputed to me, which I can neither by any reasonable Conftruction or Inference be understood to affirm, and, from the Persons I am concern'd with, I can expect no more Favour or Justice than I have already found, it may be farther necessary, both as a Vindication of my former Affertions and as a Guard to my present, to consider more distinctly what Effects and Obligations I afcribe to the Laws of an Establishment, and what I do not.

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That the Establishment of a Religion is not offer'd as a Proof of its Truth. How far human Authority is a reasonable Ground of Assent in Questions of Religion.

TAD I inferr'd the Truth of our Religion from its Civil Establishment, the Deifts might have treated the Argument, with that Levity which 2 Mr. Chandler advises: But a Deist of common Sense might perceive, that I appeal'd to the Laws of our Establishment, not for the Conviction of his Understanding, but the Correction of his Insolence. Where the Truth of the Christian Religion was the Question before me, I used other Arguments: But when a private Subject took upon him, publickly to oppose the Right of the Legislature to enact any fuch Law, to represent this Power as unjust and Tyrannical, and under these Characters to dissuade all

[·] Pref: p. 15.

Submission to it, these I think Actions inconsistent with the Obligations of a Subject, and that the Execution of our Laws may justly be called for in Restraint of them. The Truth of a Religion depends on its proper Grounds. If it was false before it was establish'd, the Establishment will not make it true: And he, who from the Evidence of the Thing, is convinced it is falle, cannot upon any Authority believe it true. To affert the Determinations of the Magistrate to be the ultimate Rule and Measure of Truth in Religion or Morality, the proper Ground of an Affent of Judgment, to which all Evidences and Convictions of private Reason ought to be submitted, is properly HOBBISM: And to affert this of the Determinations of the Church, Clergy, any Bishop, or Council, or any other dernier Resort of Ecclesiastical Authority is POPERY. I presume my felf equally secure from any just Imputation of either of these Absurdities.

How far the Affirmation of human Authority is, in any Case, a proper Ground

Ground of Affent, and what diffinguish'd Regard is due to the Judgment of the Clergy in Matters of Religion, I have b formerly consider'd. I think it impossible for any one, who attends to the Limitations under which I affert my Conclusions, to find the least Shadow of POPERY in them. I perceive the Gentlemen, under whose Animadversions I am at present, are not unacquainted with what I then wrote; and if they had been inclined to do me Juflice, might have observ'd, that the same Charges and Objections they now make, were then consider'd and answer'd, so far as concerns ecclefiastical Authority. When those Answers are shewn insufficient, I may be obliged either to retract or defend them; but I defire to be excused from running thro' that whole Subject again, as often as any one shall think fit to repeat the same Objections, with the Addition only of some new Revilings. But fince in the Cenfures of these Writers there is scarce a Page

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without some Resections on me, as enslaving the Liberties of private Judgment to the mere Assirmations or Decisions of the Clergy, it may be expected I shou'd do my self Justice in some Notice of them: And if I go a little out of the Line of my proper Subject, the Digression may be pardonable.

THE Scheme of Authority indeed which I contend for supposes, as the Letter Writer observes, That one Man or Body of Men may be wifer than others; a Supposition which I think no Man in his right Mind will deny: And which I shou'd imagine this Gentleman wou'd not contest, who manifestly presumes himself or his Friend wifer than all the World, and that they have found out the great Secrets of Government, the True and only Scheme for regulating Society, which the Wisdom and Confultations of all Ages before them have overlook'd. To Persons of their extenfive Learning and Inquiries it may be

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c Lett. p. 37. 1 Lit. Scheme confid. p. 413.

feldom necessary to assent upon Authority; but amidst all this Knowledge they must be very ignorant of Mankind, if they have not observ'd, that the greater Number of them must necessarily depend on the Authority of others for the Truth of Politions of great Importance to them, and even in those relating to Religion, which in my e Preface I refer'd to. If any one doubts of this Fact, 'tis ten to one but the next Man he meets in the Street, will, upon Trial and Examination, prove an Instance of it, and convince him that there are Christians, to whom it is strictly and absolutely necessary to affent upon Authority, in forming fome of their most fundamental Conclusions in that Religion. In fuch Cases and to fuch Persons Authority is Reason, and the best Authority the best Reason: Neither is the Liberty of their private Judgment in the least abridg'd by affenting upon it; for the Liberty of private Judgment cannot extend beyond the Power of it; and where the Affirmations of

e Pag. 54.

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Authority are the only Evidence they are capable of in a Subject, they act with as free and as rational an Use of their Understanding in assenting upon it, as in affenting to Demonstration in a Subject which admits fuch Proof. And bidding fuch Persons, pursue their Conclusions in fuch a Subject by the unaffifted Strength of their own Understanding, without relying on human Authority in any Step of the Deduction, and believe nothing but what is proved to them by the Evidence of the Thing, is prescribing an impossible Condition of Assent, and in Effect bidding them believe nothing at all. Shou'd these Gentlemen persuade a Man who wants to pass from Dover to Calais, not to enter into a Ship, or commit himfelf to a Pilot, upon Suggestions-" That " these Ships and Crews with their Offia cers over them are all human Inventi-" ons to get a Livelyhood; -That " the Pilot is fallible, and may mistake " his Way, or abuse his Confidence and " carry him where he pleases, and sell " him for a Slave; —That he has a " natural Faculty of Swimming, which " he

"he had better trust to, and not be be"holden to any Body," their Argument
wou'd not be one Jot less absurd, than
when they persuade a private Christian
of ordinary Capacities and Education, to
examine the Grounds and Evidences of
his Religion by his own single Strength,
without relying on the Knowledge or
Honesty of any Guide, or Number of
Guides, thro' the whole Inquiry.

THE Author of Grounds and Reasons indeed, in his Project of Free Debate, seems to guard against the difficulty of this Argument. He tells us, that upon his Scheme, fall Points of Speculation whatsoever wou'd be drop'd among the Vulgar. And afterwards, having confess'd that & most Men conscious of their own Weakness, see plainly, that they are unable, by any Application to Inquiries, to judge for themselves in many Points, thence conclude, that they ought to be govern'd in their Belief by the Judgment of some others—and so take up with

f Pref. p. 23. 8 Pag. 36, 37.

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Guides --- He very much disapproves fuch Conduct, and, in order to diffuade fuch Persons from it, tells them, that these are Matters, h wherein, as undenstanding nothing, they have no Concern, and shou'd not pretend to have any Opinion at all. Now among the Points of Speculation which, according to bis Scheme, the Vulgar are to drop, 'tis plain He must even principally mean this, Whether the Gospel be a divine Revelation or not. For the Points to be drap'd by the Vulgar, are the fame in which he contends for the free Debate of other Men: And the whole View of his Preface is to affert his Right to the free Debate of this Point, in the Book follow-Consequently this is a Point the Vulgar are to drop, and wherein, as understanding nothing, they have no Concern, and shou'd not pretend to have any Opinion at all. This indeed cuts the Argument short: For if this be a Point in which they have no Concern, and ought not to have any Opinion at all, 'tis

to no Purpose to observe, that they can have none, without relying on the Authority and Guidance of other Men. But the Solution will be attended with this fcurvy Consequence, That these poor Men must have no Religion at all. For if they must have no Opinion at all about the Truth or Grounds of the Christian Religion, I am fure they cannot have that Religion; and the same Reasons will exclude them from all others. Religion then, it feems, must be left entirely to the Scholars and Gentle-folks, and to them 'tis to be of no other Use, but as a Subject for Disputation, to improve their Parts and Learning. But methinks the Vulgar might be indulged a little of it now and then, upon Sundays and Holydays, instead of Bull-baiting and Foot-ball. We Christians have very different Sentiments towards them. We have a Notion that our Religion was preach'd to the Poor, as well as to the Rich; equally proposed to the Faith, and intended for the Direction of noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, and, refpectively to their feveral Capacities, as reason-0 4

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reasonably credible by one, as the other. It was at first offer'd to the Faith of Mankind, by Evidences equally adapted to the Conviction of all Capacities. All who did not fee the Miracles wrought by our Saviour, must receive the Report of them from human Authority; and I prefume they who did not see, and yet believed, acted very reasonably. When all the Eye-witnesses of these Facts were dead, it was impossible that those who came after shou'd have any other outward Evidence of them, but the Tradition of their Testimony. In this Question, as it stands at this Day, even those of the greatest Capacities and Improvements must argue from the Reports of human Authority, unless they can recal a Series of Actions which pass'd almost 2000 Years fince, and bring them under their own personal Trial and Inspection. The final Conclusion indeed is their own. both in judging of the Credibility of the Relations, and how far the Truth of Christianity may be infer'd from them. They act here with a full Liberty of their own Reason, and every private

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vate Christian with as much as they do: But for the Truth of the Premisses. the Certainty of the Facts whence the Conclusion is to be deduced, both must equally rely on human Authority; with this only Difference that one relies on the Authority of Books, i. e. Men dead fome Centuries ago, the other on the Authority of living Men reporting the Testimonies of those Books to them, and which 'tis impossible for them to confult with a proper Examination themselves. An illiterate Man assents to these Reports, upon the same Grounds of Credibility that He believes there was fuch a Man as Julius Cafar, that He was in Britain, fought with the Inhabitants there, &c. He cannot, indeed, trace down the Tradition of Cafar's Commentaries, prove them genuine, or ascertain the Import of some Expressions in them. fo well as the Scholar, who reports them to him, may do. In these Points He unavoidably must, and reasonably may, rely on his, or some other Person's, Authority: But then He may, with as just an Inference of his own Understanding, conclude cerning

conclude hence that Britain was then inhabited, as the Scholar himfelf can do. In like Manner, tho' fuch a Person cannot by his Inquiries deduce the Tradition of the Books of the Gospel, prove that they were written by the Perfons whose Names they bear, That they are transmitted down to us without any material Alterations, That the Tranflation, in which he reads them, is just Sc. yet, when upon fuch Authority as in other like Cases he may reasonably rest on, he is fatisfy'd in these Particulars, He is as capable of inferring the divine Revelation of the Gospel from the Facts reported in Attestation of it, as the Critick himself is. The Conclusion is as obvious to his Capacity, as the other's: And he may very reasonably upon this Evidence become a Christian. When He is so, he will perceive, that, by the Terms of that Religion, he must become a Member of a Society, or Church professing it, in which certain Persons are appointed, by Order and Office to be Guides and Instructers of others, in such Doubts and Queftions as may arise concerning

cerning the Import and Directions of that Religion. In such Questions it has been commonly, and truly observed, that the peculiar Attention of the Clergy to those Parts of Learning, which are of use in ascertaining the Meaning and Interpretation of the Scriptures, may very reasonably advise the Recourse of private Christians to them, and give some distinguish'd Weight to their Judgment. No, it feems they get by their Profession, and therefore my Correspondent thinks Men shou'd rather consult and rely on him, who will teach them for nothing. But may it not as well be fuggefted, that He is influenced in his Argument by hopes of plundering the Clergy of their Possessions, as that they are influenced by the Defire of keeping them? Will this Writer argue thus with Respect to any other Profession or Order of Men? Will He perfuade a Sick-man, rather to fend for him than a Physician? Or one who doubts of a Point in Law, to trust his Judgment, rather than a Law-

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i Lett. p. 39, 41.

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yer's, because these Gentlemen take Fees, and live by their Prosessions?

Bur the Character of the Clergy to which I especially claim the Deference of private Christians, is their Office and Commission. They are appointed by an Institution of Christ to be Teachers and Guides to the Flock, that they might no more be tofs'd to and fro, and carried about by every Wind of Doctrine. He who owns Christ for his Lawgiver, will Regard his Institution; and, in Questions of his Religion, if he cannot fatisfy himself by his own Search, and must in the Event rest on some Man's Judgment or other, will think himself obliged, in Obedience to Christ, to give a Preference to theirs, who, according to his Institution, are appointed to be his Guides. Under this Character I am not afraid to affert a distinguish'd Authority to every Minister of Jesus Christ, and even to my felf the meanest of them; how jocofe foever my k Animadverters may think

¹ Lett. p. 81, 82. Mr. C. Pref. p. 19.

themselves, in imputing this Claim to me: Neither shall I be ashamed thus far to magnify mine Office. To me the least of Christ's Servants some Measure of this Regard is due, and especially from those more immediately committed to my Care. 'Tis their Duty to consult me in all Doubts and Questions of Christian Duty, and where they must in the Event rest on some Man's Judgment or other, cateris paribus to prefer mine. And tho' I am not infallible, but may mistake in my own Judgment, and in Confequence of it millead them; yet they will have this Defence before Chrift, That they have fought his Will in the Methods which he has directed, and, where they wanted a Guide, prefer'd one appointed to that Office according to his Institution. But neither to the least nor to the greatest, neither to my self nor my Superiors, neither to the fingle nor united Judgment of any Clergy have I ever fubmitted even the meanest Christian's Convictions of Truth; but have constantly afferted, and always shall affert. That

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That no Authority can be of equal Weight with the Evidence of the Thing.

BUT I return to my proper Subject, and observe, that, in Questions of Religion, the Office of the Magistrate gives him no diftinguish'd Authority at all, to which Assent of Judgment is due in Preference to other Mens. As a Christian. He owes the same Regard to the commission'd Teachers of that Religion that other Members of the Church do. We are bound to obey him as a Ruler, but we are not bound to affent to him as a Teacher. The Authority of these two Characters is of very different Confideration, tho' often confounded. theless, with the Respect to his personal Qualifications and Abilities, the Magistrate stands on the same Ground with other Men: And fo far as the Conclusions of the Legislature in any Community may be supposed to have been form'd upon due Examination and Attention, and with Capacities equal to the Subject, they may give a Presumption of Truth, and incline Assent in the same ProporProportion that the same Qualities in other Men do; but never in Contradiction to our own Perceptions of Truth. And therefore had I affirm'd, the Judgment of the Legislature declared by the Establishment of a Religion, to be some Argument of the Truth of it, the Polition had been defensible: But it was never in my View, to offer the Conclusions of Civil Authority as a Ground of Affent in Matters of Religion, even thus far; much less as an Authority which ought to overrule our own Convictions. The Magistrate, or Legislator, as such only commands; and the Submission due to him under that Character, is not Assent of Judgment, but Obedience of Practice, fo far as may confift with prior Obligations. The Nature and Ends of Society require an Obedience, either active or passive, to his Laws, whether we approve the Matter of them or not; but the Nature and Ends of Society do not require Affent to his Judgment. And my denying to private Subjects a Right publickly to oppose his Laws, does not in the least imply an Obligation to affent to his JudgJudgment in the Matter of them. Nothing therefore can be more unjust or impertinent, than those Suggestions that, upon my Principles, Popery will be the true Religion in Spain, Presbytery in Scotland, and Mahometism in Turkey. These are, indeed, the establish'd Religions in those Places, but not one Jot the more true for being establish'd. To the Laws establishing Religion Civil Obedience is due, in the same Measures, and under the same Reserves, in Spain as in England; but Affent of Judgment, against private Convictions, is no Part of the Obligations arifing from the Establishment in either.

SECT. II.

Some farther Reflections on the Effects and Obligations of a Civil Establishment of Religion.

I have before occasionally observed, and must here, in justice to my Subject as well as to my self, repeat, That by

Mr. C. Pref. p. 21, 22, 29.

a Civil Establishment a Christian and Church and a Civil Society do not become the same Thing, an Effect I am m suppofed to ascribe to it, but without any Foundation by me given for it. The Church, or religious Society establish'd, remains the same religious Society it was before, subsisting on the Foundation it was first built on, with the same Offices and Administrations, the same social Rules, and the same Terms of Union between the Members. The Establishment (e.g.) of that religious Society we call the Church of England, does not alter that Society in its Nature or Essentials. but is purely adventitious to it. It would remain the same Christian Church. if the State should think fit to establish Mahometism: The Commission and Office of its Pastors to all purely ecclesiastical Effects the same, and the mutual Duties, arising from the Relation between them and their Flock, the same. And if, by the Rules of Christian Reliligion, an unnecessary Departure from

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m Mr. C. Pref. p. 27.

them be finful, it will continue to be fo, whatever Civil Power may determine about it. How far the Establishment should extend, whether to all, or only some of the Rules of that Church, depends on the Pleasure of Civil Power. But so far as it does extend, those Actions which were before enjoin'd on its Members only by the Rules of that Society, are then also requir'd from them by the Laws of the Land.

THE Establishment of any Religion being purely a Civil Act, can have only Civil Effects. I have endeavour'd to affign the proper Limitations to the Magiftrate's Power in Matters of Religion; within those Limitations, his Laws concerning it have the same legal Effects, and are attended with the fame legal Obligations, on himself and his Subjects, that other Civil Laws have, within their proper Extent. The general Effect of an Establishment, and from which all others arife, is, That the Laws or Rules of a Religion, or of a Church professing that Religion, are thereby incorporated, or made made a Part of the Laws of that Civil Community. All the Power of Legiflation which the Magistrate has, is to make Civil Laws for that Community. If he has any Power to make Laws with Regard to Religion, those Laws must be Civil Laws, a Part of the Body of the Civil Laws of that Community. Thus the Thirty nine Articles, the Liturgy, Ordinal, Discipline, and Polity of the Church of England are incorporated into, become the Matter, and made a Part, of the Body of our Laws: 'Legal Effects are annex'd to its Administrations, legal Provisions made for its Support, and certain Rights and Privileges fettled by Law on the Pastors and Professors of it.

THE first particular Effect I observe of these Laws, is that they give the Professors of that Religion a legal Property, in the Privileges and Advantages they confer on them; and consequently a Right to be protected by Law, in the Enjoyment of them. This Assertion is

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very grievous to Mr. " Chandler; but by a legal Property I can conceive nothing elfe, but some Right or Possession appointed and confirm'd to any one by Law. If we have no Laws confirming the Favours of our Establishment to us. we have then indeed no legal Claim of Property in them; but if we have fuch Laws, the Advantages affigued by them are held by as good Right, Title, and Claim of Law as any other Civil Tenure is. On this Argument I observ'd the · Revolution was founded. The Fact is notorious to every one, who is in any Measure acquainted with the Debates of that Time. P Bishop Burnet, A Wellwood, and almost all who engaged in Defense of that happy Event, constantly urge this in Reply to the Objection brought from the Practice of the first Christians, and the Principles of passive Obedience they maintain'd - " That the "Christian Religion, indeed, as such, did not allow its Disciples to resist

n Pref. p. 15. Pref. to Serm. p. 42. P Inquiry inte

"Civil Power, in Defense of their Pro-" fession of it;" but our Case differ'd much from that of the first Christians. The Profession of our Religion, and the Advantages annex'd to it, were, by the Stipulations of our Princes, and the Sanctions of our Laws, become our legal Property: And therefore whatever Opposition our Constitution allow'd in Defense of any other legal Property, was equally justified in Defense of this. I think this Reasoning good, and if it was good then, it is and ever will be good, while our Laws continue in Force. But whatever the Reasoning is, or was, I only afferted the Fact, that the Revolution was founded on it. Mr. r Chandler indeed has offer'd a most profound Refutation, either of the Affertion or the Reasoning, I know not which, - It cannot be true because St. Paul has told us that - I No Man can lay any other Foundation but Christ Jesus - But to this, and fome other Reasonings from Scripture as amazing as this, I hope He will

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r Pref. p. 35. \$ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

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be for merciful, as to excuse me from replying.

I am ask'd, with great Pertness, What fort of Religion is thus incorporated into our Civil Constitution ? The Law will answer for me, that 'tisthe Christian Religion, as profes'd under the Rules of the Church of England. This and no other was the Religion, whose Profession and annexed Privileges were claim'd as a legal Property at the Revolution, for our Laws afferted no other. The Invalion of this Property by dispensing with the Laws which protected it, and giving the Rights and Privileges of the establish'd Church, to Persons and Professions incapable by Law of receiving them, were, among other Acts, judged a Breach of the original Contract between the King and People. These Laws we confess revocable and alterable by the Legislature. In the Alterations made in them by the Acts of Indulgence the Pastors and Members of this Church chearfully concurr'd: But, I

Mr. C. Pref. p. 16.

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prefume, did not then imagine, they reversed the Establishment. We take the Liberty to affirm, that, abating only the express Exemptions of those Acts, the Laws of our Establishment continue in their full Vigor, and are u perpetuated, as far as Civil Provisions can perpetuate any Constitution. They are declared * Fundamental; our Kings are oblig'd toy profess that Religion, and bind themselves by Oath to protect and defend it. And it was specially provided, that if upon the Demise of the late Queen, and before the Arrival of her Successor, the Regency appointed shou'd presume to consent to the Repeal of those Laws, they shou'd be guilty of 2 High Treason. We acknowledge these Laws are revocable by the Legislature in its last Recourse, because I cannot conceive any but what are fo; but I presume, our Legislators will fee better Reasons than have yet been suggested, before they repeal any of them, even those which a Mr. Chandler thinks indefenfible. I have offer'd fomething in De-

u Anna 50. C. 5. * Will. 31, 120, y Anna 40, & 250. C. 8. * Pref. p. 17.

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fense of them from such Objections as wou'd represent them inconsistent with the Nature of Religion. If they are free from Reproof on that Head, our Legislators are at Liberty to consider the Civil Tendency and Effects of them. They will remember the good Service they once did us, when they were the only Civil Barrier which kept us from being overrun with Popery, Our Constitution admits no dispensing Power to be lodg'd with any, not even with the King himfelf: And for a Claim of this Power, even with Respect to these very Laws, Mr. b Chandler himself reflects on some former Princes with great Severity. I hope it was not his Intention to compliment his late Majesty with it; tho' when we attend to the Import of those Encomiums he gives Him, for having c delivered Him and his Friends from the persecuting Spirit and Principles of the Clergy, and his Confidence that He would still continue to deliver them, we can hardly find any other Meaning in them. For what are those persecuting

⁶ Pref. p. 7. e Pref. p. 13.

Principles which He tells us the Clergy endeavour'd to insinuate? What Persuafions to persecute were offer'd to that Prince, by any of the Clergy, thro' his whole Reign? I know of none: But ain concern'd only to answer for my self. I find my felf, indeed, very plentifully flander'd with Imputations of this Kind, and all the odious Titles that Malice can fuggest bestow'd upon me; but, amidst all this Clamour, I can fecurely challenge any Man, who will do me Justice, to charge any Principle of Persecution on any Polition I have ever affirm'd; and have the Pleasure to find my felf acquitted from them, by Persons as eminently distinguish'd by their Temper, and Moderation, as by their Stations, and Learning; And as for fuch virulent Enemies to our Establishment as this Writer appears to be, I think their Resentments an Honour to me. I have indeed afferted the Right of the establish'd Church, to the Protection of those Laws which are enacted for its Defense; and this I shall never be ashamed, or afraid to do. Other Ground of this Outcry against me I defy my -47

my Adversaries to shew: And if this be the Principle of Persecution of which they are fo impatient, then, 'tis plain, the Persecution they mean, is the Execution of our Laws; and confequently, when they compliment his late Majesty for delivering them from these Persecutions, and express their Affurance that he wou'd still continue to deliver them, they can be understood to mean nothing elfe, but that He had fuspended and hindred the Execution of those Laws, i. e. dispensed with them, and wou'd continue fo to do: An Imputation of the greatest Dishonour to a Prince, who had folemnly fworn to execute those Laws, and govern according to them. I never express'd the least defire that those Laws shou'd be alter'd, or that any Limitations added to them, shou'd be recall'd. I take them as they are, and prefume I can injure no Man. while I only call for an Execution of the Law. A Toleration I think necessary to us; neither have I, in any thing I ever wrote, expressed any Dislatisfaction in the Terms under which it is now granted: and shall always applaud the Justice of the igoti) GoGovernment, in protecting the Dissenters in the Liberties indulg'd them by Law. But when these Limitations are allow'd, they must pardon me, if I assert our Right to the Execution of the Laws of our Establishment, according to their present Extent, and to be desended by them from Affront and Invasion. And I suppose, with all Submission, that an Obligation arises from these Laws on the executive Power, to afford us the Protection of them.

THE Obligations derived on private Subjects by the Laws of an Establishment, will be various to different Men. To an active Compliance with any human Law Conscience can oblige no further, than the Action directed appears lawful; which Appearance must depend on every Man's private Judgment. How far any Man may be obliged in Conscience, actively to oppose such Law, and in what Cases the Magistrate may justly and reasonably permit or restrain such Opposition, has been so distinctly consider'd, that I need not enlarge farther on that Subject.

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I hope I have refuted the general Charge against me, and that my Conclusions will not appear either dinhuman, or irreligious; but promotive of Religion, and Virtue, of the Order and Peace of Society, and adjusted to all the Liberty that can consist with the necessary Obligations of Social Union. But there remains still a farther Charge upon me, of dinjustice to the Author of literal Scheme consider d, &c. And this Charge, I suppose, will be farther aggravated, if I do not take some more particular Notice, of what is offer'd in his Desense.

SECT. III.

and be various to different laten.

A more particular Vindication of my Censure of some Passages in the 13 Chap. of literal Scheme consider'd, &c.

A DMITTING all I have in general affirmed of the Nature, Obligation, and Effects of a legal Establishment of Religion, yet if this Author has

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not offended against any such Law, or if his Actions are protected under any Exemptions, which either my own Principles or the Laws allow, I acknowledge it an Injustice to impute such Offence to him, or to call for the Execution of the Law in his Restraint. My Censures, which I am here concerned to defend, are directed against his Scheme of Liberty, and the Propositions contained in it. If the publishing such Schemes and Propositions be an Act of publick Opposition to the Laws of our Establishment, inconfiftent with the Duty of a private Subject, with the Order and Peace of Society, an Affront to the Authority by which they are enacted, injurious to the legal Rights of the establish'd Church, and not protected under any Exemptions of Law. I presume I cannot have injur'd this Gentleman in my Cenfures.

· Now if Religion, in the Sense I have explain'd my felf to mean, be a proper Subject of Human Laws, the final Judgment as to what Conclusions on that Subject shou'd be enacted into Law, must rest with TOOS A.

the Legislators in every Community. I have consider'd what Evidences of Truth, what Means of finding it, what Rules of Equity or Moderation they may reasonably attend to, in forming these Resolutions. But nevertheless, tho' they shou'd mistake their Rule in any of these Points, their Resolutions must be Laws, and, within the Extent and Limitations express'd, have the same Civil Effect and Obligation, and be equally protected from the publick Opposition of private Subjects with any other Civil Laws of that Community.

Such Opposition as the Civil Constitution allows to be made to all Laws, may also, without legal Offence, be made to these.

WHEN the Civil Constitution gives a Right to Persons, in certain Stations or Offices, or to all Subjects, within certain Rules and Methods of Application, publickly to oppose all Laws, these Laws may be opposed, within these Rules, as well as any other.

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AND where any particular Acts of Opposition to these Laws are, by express Toleration, exempted and indulged, such Acts are free from any Offence against Law. And if this Gentleman's Conduct is within the general Liberties of every Subject, or is protected by any of these special Pleas, I must confess I have done him wrong, and owe him the Satisfaction, of asking his Pardon.

seuro 3 priving o marketia northern RELIGION is here consider'd, purely as fome outward Scheme of it is become the Matter of a Civil Law; in which Consideration, it stands upon the same Ground with other Civil Laws. I wou'd ask then, whether, when the Legislature in any Community has debated and refolved any Question proper for their Confideration, and enacted fuch Refolution into a Law, it can confift with the Peace and Order of that Community, for every private Subject who happens not to approve the Law, to be allowed to keep the Question still under a publick Debate, and publish what he pleases in Opposition resultid

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tion to fuch Refolution? Before fuch Refolution is made and enacted, every Subject is at Liberry to declare or publish his Opinion about it; for where there is no Law, there is no legal Tranfgreffion: And after it is enacted, an Oppolition to it, within the Limits and Cafes before excepted, is allow'd: But my Question is, whether, exclusive of these Cases and Exceptions, when the supreme Authority has debated and determin'd a Conclusion of Law, a private Subject may, confiftently with the Peace of the Society, and the common Duty of Subjection, be permitted to continue on the Debate, or revive it as often as he pleases in a publick Way, (i. e.) print and publish Books and Arguments against the Justice or Expediency of the Law? The Intention, or at least the Consequence of fuch Actions, must be disparaging the Wildom or Justice of the Legislature, taking from them the Esteem and Confidence of their Subjects, difquieting the Minds of those who are fatisfy'd with the Law, and railing up Parties in Opposition to it. The Laws establishing

blishing Religion stand, as Laws, on the same Foot with all others; and if such Acts of Opposition to other Laws wou'd justly be esteem'd Mutiny and Sedition, they will have the same Characters, when done in Opposition to the Laws establishing Religion.

My Correspondent, indeed, tells me, that the Author of Literal Scheme, &c. has faid or done nothing censurable by any Law: e That 'tis no where criminal in our Law, to affert that the Prophesies in the old Testament are not fulfill'd in Christ in their literal Sense; and that the Apostles cited them, as fulfill'd in a typical Sense. He knows very well, that 'twas not for either of these Affertions I call'd for the Cenfures of Law: but for the Politions of his SCHEME of LIBERTY in his 13th Chapter, where he plainly condemns the legal Establisha ment of our Religion, as unjustifiable, and what ought to be repeal'd: And dictates his Scheme to the Legislature

[·] Letter p. 13.

as the f true and only Scheme by which the World ought to be regulated. These I presume are Liberties not indulged to any Subject; an Affront to the Wisdom and Justice of the Legislature, as well as an Invasion of the Rights of the establish'd Church.

But in his Defense it is observ'd that & every Man has Liberty allow'd to speak and does at Times Speak of the Inconveniences of certain Laws, and has Liberty to publish his Reasons for abolishing and amending old Laws. And the Laws relating to Religion are no more exempted from standing upon the Foot of Sense and Reason, than the Laws relating to Trade, Peerage, and the Extent of the Powers of King, Lords, and Commons, I ask no more in my Supposition, than is here granted me; that the Laws relating to Religion stand upon the same Foot, with the Laws relating to Peerage, &c. And I presume, if this Gentleman shou'd use the same Liberty in

⁵ Lett. p. 14. & Lit. Sch. p. 413.

the Subjects he mentions, that he has taken with the Establishment of Religion, he wou'd be more obnoxious to Law, than he feems to think. Shou'd He publickly dispute, and oppose the King's Negative, or the Right of the Peerage or House of Commons to vote in the Legislature; or shou'd he, even with Respect to Trade, publish an Invective on the Injustice of taking Tonnage and Poundage, or of prohibiting any Branch of Traffick; and declare, that the Magistrate ought to be excluded, from intermeddling with Mens private Commerce; I suppose He might find the Magiftrate had fomething to do with him, tho' no special Clause in any Act of Parliament cou'd be affign'd, particularly forbidding fuch Arguments. But we have a late Precedent, whence he maylearn the Opinion of the Law of the Liberties he has assumed. He cannot but remember, that Dr. Sacheverel was impeach'd by the House of Commons, and tried, and condemned by the supreme Court of Judicature in this Nation, for this 0 2

this Article, among others, -h That. in a Sermon publickly preach'd, and printed, He had suggested and maintained, that the Toleration granted by Law, was unreasonable, and the Allowance of it unwarrantable. I appeal to every common Understanding, whether this Gentleman has not, at least as strongly, suggested and maintain'd, that the present Establishment of Religion is unreasonable and unwarrantable, as Dr. Sacheverel suggested this of the Toleration. And if this Suggestion was adjudged a high Crime and Misdemeanour, in the Dr. acting in a proper Office of his Ministry, tho' extending it to Subjects esteem'd beyond the regular Liberties of it, Is it a less Crime and Misdemeanour in this Gentleman, who appears in no allow'd Character of a publick Teacher, to suggest and maintain the same of the Establishment? I presume, the Laws of the Establishment are as facred and inviolable as the Act of Toleration. They are declared Fundamental to our Confti-

Sacheverel's Trial, Art. 2d.

tution: And our Princes are fworn to protect the Church in all the Rights ascertain'd to it by them. And if a publick Vindication was due to the Toleration from the Doctor's Suggestions, Is it less due to the Establishment, from a plain explicit Condemnation of it as unreasonable and unwarrantable?

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Bur this Gentleman may be pleased to observe, that, besides the special Laws of the Establishment against which He has offended, we have also certain Laws against Blasphemy: And if suggesting that Jesus Christ, whom under the Direction and Encouragement of the Law we worship as God, and thro' whose Merits and Intercession we hope to be faved, was a vile Impostor, is not Blasphemy in the Ears of every Christian, I cannot conceive what is. He must suppose the whole Legislature and Magistracy to be Scepticks and Infidels, before he can presume, on their Approbation or Connivance to fuch Outrage

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i I particularly recommend to his Consideration that Statute of Will. III. Anno. 9. and 10. Cap. 32.

in Defiance of Law. Mr. Chandler, I perceive, is not fo very confident of this Author's Security from the Cenfure of our Laws, as the Letter Writer is. He appears exceedingly alarm'd at the Report of an intended k Profecution of Him or his Publishers, and is much offended with some of the Clergy, whom he supposes to promote it. I assure him, I am not one of those Clergy, and am a Stranger to any fuch Defign; but I beg leave to observe to him, that if there are no Laws which render the Publication of fuch Books criminal, the Presenters cannot hurt the Publishers of them; but if there are Laws against which they offend, and Persons who by their Oaths and Office are obliged to present such Offences, I do not perceive, how any of his Reasons excuse them from doing it. They to whom the Execution of Laws is committed, and on whose Office it is enjoyn'd, are not to judge of the Fitness or Expediency of them; That belongs to the

^{*} Refledt. &c. p. 18.

Consideration of the Legislature; what the Legislature has enacted, they are bound, according to their Station, to execute, and whoever persuades them to do it, will only persuade them to do their Duty.

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I have allow'd, indeed, feveral Exemptions, under which an active Oppolition to a Law may confift with the Duty of a Subject; but I do not apprehend, the Gentleman whom I cenfured. to be protected under any of them. He is, for ought appears, a private Man; or if he has any Share in the Legislature, he neither acts in that Capacity here, nor as a Petitioner to it within the Rules of the Constitution. What Measures of Opposition to the Establishment are protected from Censure by the Act of Toleration, the Learned in the Profession of the Law can best determine: But I prefume, his Case is not comprehended within the Indulgences of that Act. He is, or at least affects to appear under the Character of, an Enemy to the Christian Religion, and the Civil Establish-

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ment of it. If the Toleration allows fuch Persons, publickly to arraign the Wisdom and Justice of that Establishment. I must confess my self to have mistaken the Import of that Act. But if Men of this Character are wholly out of its Meaning; if it allows not even those to whom it extends, to vilify and affront the Establishment, or to contradict and deny the Authority by which it is enacted; If these Actions are Offences against our Laws, and not protected by the Toleration, I may, without Injury to the Toleration, observe that they are fo, and that the Cenfures of those Laws may justly be inflicted on them. I am not disputing what our Laws should be, but I affirm what they are. I admit all Exemptions and Limitations fet to them by the Legislature, and only affert the Justice of executing them, in Cases not comprehended in those Exemptions: And therefore I despise the Malice and Impertinence of those Reflections on me as an Enemy to Toleration, and as arguing against it. The Toleration, granted by our Laws, it was never in my Thoughts

Thoughts to dispute or reprove; neither ean any Man of common Sense or Candor find the least Colour for fuch an Imputation on me. I acknowledge it equally in the Magistrate's Power, to limit an Establishment by a Toleration, as to grant an Establishment: That there are Cases, in which a Toleration may be both reasonable and necessary; and that the Magistrate is the ultimate Judge of those Cases. But against an unbounded Toleration of all Sects and Professions of Religion, without any Distinction of Principles, or restraint of Actions; against a Toleration to oppose or invade the establish'd Rights of other Men; against a Toleration for private Subjects publickly to reproach our Laws and Lawgivers with Injustice and Tyranny, and to publish such Suggestions against the Establishment, as would be a high Crime and Misdemeanour if directed against the Toleration; in short, against a Liberty of transgressing both the Laws of the Establishment and of the Toleration, I am not afraid to declare my felf; and I presume, our Laws and Constitution declare

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declare the same with me. I know no Toleration for Infidels openly to difpute and condemn our Establishment. Mr. Chandler indeed thinks there ought to be: but of that neither he nor I are Judges, but the Legislature, and they are so unhappy as to differ from Him. The present Toleration I affirm not to extend to them, nor to allow to any one the Liberties I censured; and therefore censuring those Liberties is not censuring the Toleration. I hope the greater and wifer Part of our Diffenters are fatisfied with the Liberties indulged them by Law. While they are fo, I know no wife Man who defires they should be taken from them; but if there are any among them, who will not be contented unless all Inclosures are thrown down, and Schemes of Liberty admitted. subversive of all Establishment either of the present or any other Religion, they must not take it ill, if we defire fuch Protection, as our Laws have provided against such Invasions.

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declaration face twitte meble le diagne in THE Author of Grounds and Reafons, &c. tells us, That 1 the greatest Contenders for Liberty of Debate in Matters of Religion, contend for some Restraints upon that Liberty; and think that there are certain Propositions, which ought not to be called in Queftion. I wish he had told us, by whose Determination these Restraints should be fix'd. If every private Man is to be Judge in this Case, I doubt, the Scheme of Questions will never be fettled. For every Man will have an equal Right, to decide what Propositions shall be called in Question and what not: One will contend that the Toleration, another that the Establishment should be exempted: Each will be for privileging such, of whose Truth and Importance he is persuaded. A Proposition must have very hard Luck, and be very little worth, which no Body will own. And if every one may inclose what he pleases, very little will be left

in common; and the noble Science of Controversy will be grievously cramp'd and confin'd in Effect to this single Point— What Propositions should be freely debated, and what not.

METHINKS, the Character given of the Propositions in Religion to be exempted from Debate, feems to leave the Determination of the Scheme to publick Authority. We are told, they are fuch, as are necessary to be profess'd, m for the Support of Peace and Order in Society, at least not deny'd. Now publick Authority is, and must be, Judge what is necessary to the Peace and Order of Society; and confequently, what Propositions in Religion these Ends require to be privileged from publick Debate. On this Foot, as I take it, this Matter stands at present, and we are very well content to leave it there. But then this is our free Debater's great Grievance, the Bondage of which they are fo impatient, that publick Authority

should interpose in this Case, and restrain them from debating what they please. But since some Restraint is confess'd necessary, it must be fix'd by some Body or other; and if publick Authority may not fix it, it must be left to every private Man; and if nothing is to be debated, which any one shall think fit to exempt, the Liberty of Controversy will be reduced to a very narrow Compass.

But I suppose, the Point these Gentlemen would contend for, is that they may prescribe to publick Authority, what Propositions in Religion should be publickly debated, and what not. I presume, I and every private Subject have as much Right to prescribe in this Case as they have, but I think we had all of us better resolve to leave it to our Superiors, to whose Judgment the Nature and Ends of Society leave it.

THAT there is a just n Medium between Restraint and Liberty in these

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[&]quot; Grounds and Reasons, &c.

Cases, I agree. We are told, indeed, that this Medium, o from the great Importance of the Matters depending on it to Society, should seem not very difficult to fix. But be the Difficulty more or less, fince Matters of great Importance to Society depend on a due fixing this Medium, the fixing it must belong to those, to whom the Care of all Matters of great Importance to Society does belong, (i. e.) to publick Authority. The Importance it is of to Society to fix this Medium, is indeed a good Rea-fon for fixing it; but I do not perceive that it facilitates the doing it, but rather the contrary: For the Importance to Society of permitting or restraining the publick Debate of any Proposition in Religion, depends on a great Variety of Circumstances, both internal, and external. A Debate may, in some Circumstances, be permitted without Inconvenience, which in others may be attended with fatal Consequences to Society. We can hardly imagine a Pro-

[.] Pref. p. 50, 51.

position of less Moment in its self, than that debated at Hamburg: But when, by the Passions and Obstinacy of the Disputants, the Debate became the Occasion of a Civil Fewd, it was of the utmost Importance to the Society, to restrain it-The Character of the Persons engaging in a Dispute, the present Disposition and Sentiments obtaining in a Society, the Advantages it may give a foreign Enemy, are Considerations which must all be taken in and weighed, in determining how far the Peace, Order, and Welfare of a Society may be affected by it. These Circumstances are variable pro bic & nunc, and therefore the Rule in this Cafe must be from Time to Time adjusted to them; neither is it possible to make any other Provision, against the Effects which publick Disputes may have on Society, but by leaving it to publick Wisdom, either by general Regulations, or particular Interpolitions, to restrain or indulge them, as the Danger or Safety to Society appear to require. And to this Conclusion our free Debaters own Concessions necessarily lead them. For if such Propositions in Re-

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Religion ought not to be called in Question, at least, not deny'd which are necessary to be profess'd for the Support of Peace and Order in Society, and if Matters of great Importance to Society constantly depend on fixing the due Medium of Restraint and Liberty in this Case, the fixing this Restraint, and determining what Propositions shou'd not be call'd in Question, must, as I have faid, necessarily belong to those, to whom the Care of Peace and Order. and of all Matters of great Importance to Society belongs. So that these Disputers have only amused us with a Dance round a Circle, and are, by their own Concessions, brought at last, to the Point whence they pretended to remove us. Thus intangled and incoherent are all their Schemes; as all must be, which depart from the true Principles of Religious and Civil Society.

But the forecited Author imagines, the Medium or Rule of Restraint in this Case p so plainly discovers it self, that any

P pref. p. 51.

Man, placed in right Circumstances, wou'd judge rightly and truly of it. Which he thus proves: — Let, for Example, a Member of the Church of England (whom he supposes persuaded, that he is obliged in Conscience, publickly to profess the Doctrine of the Church of England,) go successively into the Countries of Presbyterians, Papists, Mahometans, and Heathens; and by sinding out the reasonable Liberty he wants himself, He can hardly fail, of sinding out the reasonable Liberty of Men. To which I answer,

renthesis, on which his Argument depends, is a pitiful Fallacy. That the Members of the Church of England are obliged, according to their Station, publickly to profess its Doctrines, so far as Admission to its Society or Offices, or Acts of Communion with it require such Profession, I acknowledge: But I deny that any Member of that Church, Layman or Clergyman, who happens to be in Popish, Mahometan, or Heathen R

Countries, is obliged in Conscience, to make a publick Profession of its Doctrines to the Inhabitants of those Countries, without a special Call to it. Neither,

2dly, Wou'd a Member of that Church think himself obliged in Conscience, without such special Call, publickly to preach against, and oppose the Religions there establish'd. Much less,

2dly, Wou'd a Member of that Church. if he had common Sense, think himself oblig'd in Conscience, publickly to profess, and teach the Inhabitants of those Places, that the Civil Magistrate has no Right to establish any Religion, and that all Establishments are unjust Abridgments of human Liberty. He wou'd know, that the Magistrate in all Countries has the fame Right, to establish such Religion as he approves, that he allows to the Magistrate in his own; and either to restrain or indulge the publick Profession of others, as its Influence on the Peace or Welfare of His People advise him. No doubt he wou'd be desirous of a Liberty to wor. fhip

ship God according to his own Religion; and if the Magistrate was pleas'd to indulge it, he wou'd receive the Favour with Gratitude, and be careful to use it without Offence: But he wou'd not be so insolent, as to demand a Liberty, publickly to debate and oppose what *Propositions in Religion* he pleased; or to dispute the Magistrate's own proper Powers, or the legal Rights of his People.

Upon the Whole, I cannot perceive, what Inference, of any Service to them, our Free Debaters can deduce from the Supposition here argued from. The utmost they can pretend to conclude from it, is that 'tis reasonable Menshould have Liberty to worship God according to their own Persuasions of Conscience; But their own Concessions admit, that this Liberty ought to be under fuch Restraints as the Civil Peace and Welfare of Society require; and fuch Liberty is already indulged in this Nation. But as to the Liberty of publickly debating Propositions in Religion, I do not fee, how the Cafe supposed has any Relation to it. A R 2 Mem-

Member of the Church of England, in the Circumstances supposed, wou'd not be obliged, by any general Principle or Rule of Conscience that I know of, publickly to dispute any Propositions of an establish'd Religion; much less those which they have taken the Liberty publickly to dispute. The Case is wholly impertinent as to this Point. And fince they allow, that this Liberty of Debate ought to be under some Restraints, fome Propositions in Religion ought to be privileged from it, and the Reasons they give for it, necessarily submit the Rules and Measures of these Restraints and Exemptions to the Judgment of the Magistrate; so far as I can apprehend, The Supposition here made, and the Arguments upon it, leave the Queftion where it stood before, and cannot afford the least Protection to the Liberties I censured. It was not atom at

I presume, the Free Debater I restected on, will not pretend any special Obligation of Conscience, to take the Liberties he has assumed, of calling for the Repeal

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Repeal of our Establishment, representing it as unjust, &c. But if he does, He must produce his Evidences; and the Magistrate must judge upon the whole, and act as his own Duty and Convictions appear to require. I know no general or special Rule of Conscience. that can oblige this Gentleman, thus publickly to infult and oppose the Laws of our Establishment. A Man, indeed, may be under a Perfuasion of Conscience. that he ought to do a very unreasonable Action; and fuch Persuasion, how groundless soever in its felf, may oblige him to act according to it; but his Perfuafion cannot repeal a Law, or alter the Duty of those, whose Office requires them to put it in Execution: And if this Writer is perfuaded in Conscience, that he ought to act as he has done; he must be content to do, what all honest Men must do, when God appears to command one Thing, and the Laws of his Civil Superiors another, He must obey God, and fubmit to the Penalties of disobeying the Laws. This Christ and his Apostles, under whose Example he R 3

he pretends to be shelter'd, did. They declared themselves sent by God to preach the Gospel to all Nations; they preach'd, and fuffer'd. They fuffer'd, indeed, unjustly, both because they gave sufficient Proof of their Divine Mission, and because the Religion they taught, had no Tendency to disturb Civil Peace, &c. But till the Civil Powers cou'd be convinced of the Innocence of their Do-Etrine, and their Mission from God, these Arguments for their Encouragement and Toleration, however just in themselves, cou'd have no Force with Respect to the Magistrate. Neither is it possible, for Government to make any general Provision, for the Impunity of all who shall plead Conscience for opposing Law. but what must in the Event render all Laws infignificant, and leave every one to do what is right in his own Eyes.

I acknowledge the Laws of our Establishment repealable by the Legislature: But whatever Reasons there may be for the Repeal of a Law, yet till it is actually repeal'd, it retains its full Force; and and they who are favour'd and protected by it, have a Right to its Execution. Suppose good Reasons might be given, for repealing the Prohibition of any Branch of Trade now forbidden, yet till it is repeal'd, that Trade is penal, and the Forfeitures incurr'd by it, may justly be demanded, by those intitled to them by Law. In like Manner suppofing there were Reasons for revoking the present Establishment of Religion; vet till it is actually revoked, the Laws protecting it are in full Vigor, and we have a Right to the Execution of them. No, it feems, they must stand still, and look on, and all Effects of them must be suspended, till this Gentleman's Conscience will let him give over Disputation. A pretty reasonable Proposal this! But if it be reasonable with Respect to these Laws, it will be equally so with Respect to all others. They also must stand still, and the Execution of them be fuspended, if any one will but write a Pamphlet against them, and pretend himself obliged in Conscience to oppose them. But if this be the Case, the Go-R4 vernment

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vernment may as well shut up Westminster-Hall, and burn the Statute Book, for there will be very little use of either.

If this Gentleman can convince the Legislature, that the Laws ought to be repeal'd, and prevail with them, by a legal Act, to repeal them; Then, and not till then, He will be exempted from the Penalties of them. But if the Magistrate is convinced that they ought not to be repealed, and that it is his Duty to execute them, He must be contented to let the Magistrate act according to his Conscience, and to suffer for acting according to his own. This indeed is a Doctrine, which, I perceive, he cannot bear, and for offering it I am reviled as a Persecutor, Inquisitor, one who a plainly desire my Adversary to be hang'd or burnt. The Letter-Writer is sure, this is a Doctrine I wou'd never practice my felf; r without doubt I wou'd set an Example, of submitting to whatever is, or may be, fet-

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[.] Lett. p. 12, r Ibid.

tled by Authority, and decline the Method of Martyrdom to prove my Sincerity. I act upon Prospects of Rewards and am hired to speak on that Side of the Question I take—— To which Calumnies I answer,

If. THAT I call'd only for the Execution of our Laws in their legal Meaning and Extent. If my Adversary has offended against no Law, nothing that I have faid, requires any Penalty to be inflicted on him: If he has offended against any Law, no legal Injury is done him, by calling for the Execution of that Law. I never mentioned any other Penalties, than the fgentle Restraints of our Laws; neither have I infinuated the least Defire of greater Severities: But I suppose, to a Person of his strong Appetite to Disputation, to be restrain'd from opposing what he pleases, is as bad as Hanging or Burning.

F Pref. to Serm. p. 46.

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2dly, In affirming that this Gentleman, if he is persuaded in Conscience that he ought to oppose our Laws, fhou'd submit to the Penalties of those Laws. I affirm only the common and necessary Condition of the Case: And I continue to fay, that when we fee a Man shrink and cry out, upon the mere Suggestion of very slight Discouragements, we have just Reason to suspect his Sincerity. If He believed himself, that his was the true and only Scheme, to promote the Happiness of Mankind u present and future, and was really perfuaded, that he was bound in Duty to God to propose it to them, the Reward he might expect from God, for obeying him in fuch an Action, wou'd support him against any human Terrors, and much more against the gentle Penalties of our Laws. They who, in the Propagation of Christianity, opposed establish'd Paganism, gave very different Proof of their Sincerity, and evidenced

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Litt. Sch. p. 13. " Pag. 415.

the Firmness of their Belief of the Doctrines and Hopes they proposed, by an undaunted Submission to Martyrdom. Neither are numerous Examples wanting, among the Clergy of this reform'd Church, of a Resolution in adhering to it, equal to that of the ancient Confesfors. And as to my felf, my Correspondent is much in the Right, that I x am not for Sufferings, where I can honeftly avoid them, and pray to God to be deliver'd from them: But I truft, that if it shou'd be his Pleasure to call me to this Trial, I cou'd, thro' his Grace affifting me, chearfully submit to it, rather than deny his Truths, or difobey his Commands. And I prefume, I have fuffer'd more from the Calumnies, Slanders, and railing Accusations of this Writer and his Friends, for afferting the establish'd Religion, than he or they have for oppofing or blaspheming it. His pitiful Suggestion of my acting upon mercenary Views I despise; and can with a clear and upright Conscience declare, That

^{*} Lett. p. 12.

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I have attentively fought Truth in all my Inquiries, and honestly followed where it appear'd to lead me, with as little Regard to any Fears or Expectations of this World, as any Man in it. Neither am I conscious to my self, that I have ever attempted to give a plau-sible Colour to any known Falshood, or afferted any Conclusion, but what I apprehend to be deducible from some true Principle.

In the present Question I have endeavour'd to shew, that the Establishment of some Religion is a proper Subject of Civil Authority. As to our particular Constitution, the Justice and Equity of the Laws of our Establishment, will, I hope, appear vindicated by the general Conclusions I have afferted in this Inquiry: And the Lenity of them I am as far from disapproving, as they who are savour'd by it. No Man is by our Laws compell'd or beaten into the establish'd Church, neither have I ever de-

Y Lett. p. 83. .

fir'd he should be. A Toleration is granted to other Religions, under few and reasonable Limitations, and I only wish, those who are so unhappy as to diffent from us, wou'd be fatisfied with it. But this I affirm, that our Religion is establish'd by Law, and that we have a Right to the Protection of these Laws, and, within their present Extent, to the Execution of them. I have afferted or defired nothing more than this; and if this be criminal, my Adversary may fet his Heart at Rest, all he contends for is done already, and the Laws of our Establishment are repeal'd. But I prefume, they are not repeal'd, and I trust never will be: And I affure this Gentleman, I am not in the least apprehensive. that his Arguments will incline the Legislature to repeal them, tho' they may have other very ill Effects. But because he recommends his Scheme to them, with fuch confident Promises of Peace, Happiness, &c. I will consider,

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What probable Effects an Attempt to execute the Scheme recommended wou'd produce.

HAD he recommended some other Scheme of Religion to succeed in the Place of that now established, as more pure, more peaceable, more agreeable to the Civil Constitution, &c. He had offered something, which perhaps might have deserved the Consideration of the Legislature; But when he persuades them to dismiss the present Religion, and establish no other in its Room, this must appear to any reasonable Man a wild impracticable Project, and which, if it could be executed, could produce nothing but Misery and Consusion. I observe upon it,

Affront to our Legislators; and suppofes them all Deists, or at least Enemies to the present Establishment: For 'tis ridiculous ridiculous to imagine, that Men should repeal the Establishment of a Religion, which they approve.

2dly, Supposing all Difficulties in the Legislature got over, that the prefent Establishment was repeal'd, and no other substituted in the Place of it, yet still this Gentleman's Scheme cou'd not fucceed in its full Effects: For the Deifts. for whom alone it is calculated, are an inconsiderable Number; infinitely the greater Part of this Nation are actually affociated under fome Scheme or other of reveal'd Religion; and therefore Religion cou'd not be reduced to a Matter so merely personal, as he wou'd have it. For these Societies, as purely religious Combinations, wou'd still remain, and the eftablish'd Church wou'd still subsist as a religious Society. This wou'd be the State of Things, unless, in Contradiction to his Principles, Civil Power shou'd intermeddle, require them all to disband, and prohibit all religious Affociations for the future.

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WELL, but the' his Scheme might not fo intirely prevail, as he cou'd wish, yet this Effect we are perfuaded to expect from it, - That all these Societies wou'd fit down fatisfy'd with their present State, in wonderful Peace and Amity, without the least Inclination in any to gain or recover the Advantage of a Civil Establishment. But, unless he has found a Secret to divest human Nature of its Passions, for which I see no Provision in his Scheme, He will never be able to assure us of this Effect from it. And I leave it to common Sense, to determine whether it be not infinitely more probable, in the Circumstances suppofed, that each of these Societies shou'd be defirous to fill up the Vacancy by the Establishment of their own Religion: And that Emulation, Strife, Confusion, and every evil Work shou'd be the Effect of their Competition for it.

3dly, Shou'd we admit this Sheme in its full Extent, and, to please this Gentleman, become all Deists Governours and

and People, yet how shou'd we secure the Continuance of this State? There ever has been, and ever will be, in Mankind a strong Disposition to hearken after divine Revelation. Some Pretenfes to it or other wou'd certainly appear among us; and, when every one must have full Liberty to preach and profess what he pleased, they wou'd as certainly gain Converts, and religious Societies, under the Belief of Revelation, wou'd come in upon us again; and, if any of them shou'd convert our Legislature, a Civil Establishment wou'd revive too. I do not see, what possible Provision can be made against this upon his Scheme. He will not suppose it impossible, for the Civil Magistrate to become a Convert to the Religion profess'd by one of these Societies: And when He is fo, I hope, He will not refuse him the Liberty of worshiping God according to his Perfuafion, under the Rules of that Society, and in Communion with it. Neither can he be deny'd the Privilege of supporting that Worship by any Acts of his own voluntary Munificence, or encouraging those li IOI

Expressions of his Favour. And as He is supposed, to have the Power of Legislation, he may ascertain these Favours to them by Law, and protect them from Insults and Invasion in the Possession of them; and when He has done this, He will have establish'd that Religion.

IN our Constitution a considerable Share of the Legislature is lodg'd, with Persons elected by the Populace; and if the present Establishment were to be repeal'd, either the religious Societies now among us wou'd continue, or if they were extinguish'd, it wou'd be imposfible, upon the Scheme contended for, to prevent the Revival of the same, or others. Now is it imaginable that these Societies shou'd concur, in choosing Representatives of no Religion at all? Is it not natural to expect, that each shou'd vote for Persons of their own Religion, or Favourers of it? And if the Majority of the People shou'd be of one Religion, the Majority of those sent by them wou'd be of that Religion too. With that Majority

jority the whole Power and Interest of that Branch of the Legislative wou'd effectually be lodged; and we may be fure, they wou'd use it for the Advancement and Encouragement of their own Religion. Sir William Temple, whose Sentiments on this Subject these Gentlemen appear fometimes very fond of, tells us, that 2 wherever the generality of a Nation are of a Belief, it is by the Force of that Concurrence introduced into the Government, and becomes the establish'd Religion of that Country. So that if the present Establishment shou'd be repeal'd, their Scheme cou'd never effectually take Place, but some other Establishment wou'd succeed in its steads And therefore unless they can offer us a better, they cannot expect we shou'd part with what we have. And I hope they will excuse our Legislators, if they will not tear our present Constitution to Pieces, and expose us to all the Distraction and Danger which, from our own Confusions, and the Arts and Malice of

² Observations on the Netherlands, p. 190.

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our Enemies, wou'd attend such a State, only to give them the Satisfaction of trying a chimerical Project, which never was, and never can be executed in any Nation under Heaven.

But the Author of Literal Scheme consider'd, &c. is exceedingly impatient, to have the Experiment made: And thinks it very hard for us to pronounce upon it, before we have tried it. I agree with him, that a All Projects, Designs, or Schemes are to be judg'd good or bad from the Effects, and therefore b defired him, to refer us to some Age or Nation, in which his Scheme had obtain'd, and produced the glorious Effects he promifes from it. We are loth to be made an Example, and venture the Convulfions of fo great a Change, upon no better Security than his bare Word. The World has now subfifted a pretty many thousand Years; and if this were the true and only Scheme for regulating Societies, we can hardly be perfuaded, that

Literal Scl. 411. b Pref. p. 47.

all Nations and Communities in the World shou'd, for so many Ages, have overlook'd it. If History furnish'd any Example of its Entertainment and Success, we are assur'd it cou'd not have escaped this Gentleman's great Reading, and he wou'd scarce have conceal'd it from us. We are now indeed refer'd for Precedents to c England, Holland, and China. As for England, if his Scheme obtains in it already, why is all this Clamour rais'd for the want of it? But in truth, there is in all these Countries fome establish'd Religion, and therefore this Scheme is not exemplify'd in either. His Argument from the Advantages arifing from fuch regulated Meafures of Liberty, as obtain in any of these Countries, is a wretched Fallacy. For thus it stands——Certain regulated Meafures of Liberty are, in these Countries, found beneficial, therefore unbounded Liberty wou'd be much more fo. ---Which is just as good Reasoning as this, --- Certain Measures of Authority in

Table.

c Lett. p. 18.

the several Subordination of Magistrates derive on a Nation great Advantages, therefore unlimited Authority committed to each wou'd derive much greater. Or—Fire and Water are in certain Proportions of excellent use to Mankind, therefore the more Fire or Water any Man has, the happier he will be. The Limitations of Liberty by an Establishment are what render it beneficial both here and in Holland; without an Establishment it wou'd soon destroy either.

I d observed, that the History of the great Rebellion furnish'd us with an Example, which came the nearest to the Scheme contended for, of any I cou'd recollect: And that the Consequences of that Experiment gave us but little Encouragement, to try it again—to which it is answered,—e That those Times do not surnish us with an exact Precedent of this Scheme. I confess they do not; neither do I believe this Scheme, in its full Extent, ever

⁴ Pref. p. 48. e Lett. p. 18, &c.

did, or ever can obtain for fix Months together in any Nation. Does the Letter-writer tell us when it was executed more fully, and with more Success than it was then? This He was concerned to do if he wou'd answer my Demand: But instead of doing this, He slides away in a Mist, and amuses his Reader with an impertinent Detail of History, in Proof that the Scheme now offer'd was not then compleatly executed, and therefore wou'd persuade us, that we cannot conclude any Thing to the Disadvantage of it from the Events of that Time.

But this Scheme was then executed as far as it ever can be. The first Stop of it, the Repeal of the Establishment, was then perfected, and the Principal Engine by which it was effected was that fundamental Maxim of this Scheme,—that Religion is a Matter merely personal, and exempt from all human Authority. As soon as the Work of Subversion was accomplished, in which only the various Factions against the Establishment were S 4 united,

united, the Presbyterians, having most Power, endeavour'd to establish themfelves, wrote and ftruggled hard for Order, and procured those Ordinances he f mentions, but the rest of the Confederacy presently turn'd the same Arms, the same Outcries of Tyranny over Conscience, &c. against them, and in the End, with the Help of that good Christian and Protestant Oliver Cromwel, demolish'd them. And then fucceeded a State of Liberty, as to Religion, which comes as near the Scheme proposed, as any that can be found in any Age or Nation. Now History affords only probable Inferences, and all I am concern'd to observe from the Hiffory of those Times is, - That shou'd we be prevail'd on fo far to comply with this Scheme, as to dissolve our Establishment (and farther than that it cou'd not be executed for any Continuance) the Experiment wou'd, in all Probability, be attended with much the same Train of Events, that follow'd then. The fame

Confusion and Disorder, the same Bickering of Parties for an Establishment, the same Persecutions of each other, as they happen'd to have Strength and Power; In Sum, a Scene of the same or equal Misery would be acted over again: And God only knows, whether we shou'd find the same happy Issue out of it, that his Providence then gave us.

quite thro hip had and arra primal a this

The Advantages which Papery then gain'd from the Dissolution of the Establishment, Is observed, as a farther Consideration which might reasonably dissuade our Legislature from repeating the Experiment. That the Emissaries of the Church of Rome were then very active, not only in their proper confess'd Character, but under various Disguises, that they mingled themselves with, and personated the several Enthusiasts of that Time, preach'd the Doctrines of the present Scheme among them, and publish'd Treatises in Recommendation of it, we are assured from good Testimonies. In

my Preface I h referr'd to the Christian Moderator, wrote by one who calls himself William Birchley, and who my Correspondent owns was a Popish Prieft, and then goes on very gravely to observe, how natural it is for all Men under Oppression to desire Ease, &c. But he conceals from his Reader, that this Man pretends to be an Independent, and quite thro' his three Parts professes that Character. His Principles are exactly the same with those of the present Scheme, and whoever compares them, will suspect, the one was copied from the other, adorn'd with the fame Revilings of ecclefiaftical Authority, and all Civil Establishment of Religion, I need not, I think, fuggest, that this Missionary's Intention in these disguised Treatifes was to advance the Romish Cause and Interest. No Man of common Sense can imagine that he believed himself, or was in earnest against all Church Authority or an Establishment of Religion: But these Principles wou'd

h Pref. p. i Lett. p. 29, 30.

divide and confound Protestants. This Priest obey'd his Instructions, and acted a Part prescrib'd to him, by those who knew very well what Service it wou'd do them. And the Confidence of that Church was fo great in these Schemes, that Mr. & Pryn tells us, the Pope then living, affirm'd to some English Gentlemen of Quality in Rome, That as old as He was, He hoped, before He died, to see England perfectly reduced to her former Obedience to that See. The Letter-writer indeed feems angry with Mr. Pryn for the Discoveries He made of the Practices and Successes of the Papists in that Scene of Confusion: But let Mr. Pryn be as factious a Scribler as he will, He 1 reports plain Facts, and appeals to fair Evidence in Support of them. And we have good Proofs, that the m Project of our Troubles was laid by that Church, and this Engine of

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[&]amp; Pref. to Plea for Tythes. 1 True and perfect Narrative, &c. p. 40. & seq. New Discovery of Popish Emissaries. Rome's Masterpiece. Vindication of secluded Members, &c. m Dumoulin's Answer to Philanax: Habernfield's Letters.

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Division pitch'd upon as the most effectual to execute them. The Success and fwer'd in the Subversion of the Establishment, and numerous Conversions confequent to it. This Gentleman has assisted me in the Proof of this particular, by a long List of Persons then reconcil'd to Popery. I observe, by the Way, that this Lift is transcrib'd verbatim from the foremention'd " Popilb Priest; and the Transcriber pretends to make an Advantage of the Observation, that these Persons were all before of the establish'd Church, yet he might have observ'd also, from the same Authority, that the Church of Rome had many Converts among other Perfuafions; for He tells us, that He knew many of o US, i.e. Independents, whose Character he all along assumes, who had turn'd Papists at the Hour of Death. But in Truth these Facts, tho? they deferve Observation, are a superfluous Proof of a Conclusion, which

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n Christian Moderator Part 2d. p. 20, 21. Christian Moderator Part 1st, p. 8.

appears to us with the utmost Evidence from the Nature of the Thing. Had we no Experience of Fact, common Sense must tell us, how manifestly the Principles of this Scheme tend to promote the Interests of that Church. For whatever breaks and difunites their Adversaries, must, proportionably to its Effects, serve them, and facilitate their Conquest. We will suppose for Argument, what I think impossible in Fact, that this Scheme should be executed by our Legislature in the full Effect of its Principles; that all religious Societies shou'd be dissipated, and Religion reduced to a Matter merely personal. It is evident, that the Church of Rome is out of the Power of our Legislature, and must still subsist a Body strongly compacted, and acting by fubril and united Counsels. And when all other Societies were broke up, they wou'd have only dispers'd Individuals, Sheep without Shepherds, to deal with, each perhaps very opinionated of his own Strength, on which he has been perfuaded wholly to rely, but to the Mif-· 10000 fionaries

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fionaries of that Church as eafy a Prey, as the Stragglers of a disbanded Army to a regular Force. The Project indeed of reducing all Religion to a Matter mercly personal is impracticable: But in the mean Time the Principle it felf is manifestly subversive of any social Union in Religion. Now Christianity is evidently a focial Institution; it appears as plainly from Scripture, that Christ and his Apostles constituted a Christian Church, as that they preach'd the Christian Faith. Suppose then, any Man to believe, as some of these Gentlemen wou'd have him, that this Principle afferts a fundamental Right of human Nature, or as others, that itis a fundamental Principle of the Reformation; must be not necessarily conclude, either against Christianity, or against the Reformation? The Infidels must gain him upon one Foot, and the Papists upon the other. If he believes that the Gospel when it requires its Disciples to be united in a Society, to obey their Ecclesiastical Rulers, to have one Faith, to speak the same Things, &c.

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contradicts a fundamental Principle of Natural Reason, this is an internal Objection which will oblige him to renounce that Religion. And if he remains convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, and that 'tis a social Religion, and requires these social Duties from him; but believes that the Principles of the Reformation are inconfistent with fuch Union and Duties, he must renounce the Reformation, and return to the Papists. And fince few, comparatively, will be prevail'd on wholly to give up Christianity, the Influence of these Doctrines must give them the far greater Share of Converts. 'Tis a weak Piece of Sophistry, to argue that the Principles of this Scheme cannot be a P Popish Engine, because they are opposite to their own profess'd Principles and Practice: For 'tis not their ultimate View, that Men shou'd rest in these Principles; but when they have gain'd thus far upon them, as to admit that these are indeed the Principles of the Re-

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formation, they need only observe to them, that the Christian Religion is a focial Institution, and that these Principles are inconsistent with such an Institution; and therefore, if they will be Christians. they must depart from the Reformation. I do not fee how any Christian, who admits their Premisses in this Argument, can avoid their Conclusion. This was a Scheme very early laid by that Church, for the Subversion of the Reformation. The Execution of it was the Errand on which Cumin, Heath, and a Multitude more under feveral Difguifes have been fent among us. The Part given them was to personate zealous Protestants, to rail at all Church Authority, all Rule, and Order as Popish; and in Opposition to it, to affert Religion to be a Matter merely personal. The great Objection they had from the Beginning urged in discredit of the Reformation, was, that it was founded on fuch Principles as no Church cou'd subfift on; Principles which must eternally divide and fubdivide, till they had rooted out all Face of a Society. To exemplify this to

to us in Fact, their Emissaries were set to Work to preach the Doctrines of this personal Scheme, as the real Principles of the Reformation. As foon as these Applications had succeeded in their natural Effects of Disorder and Confufion, these were appeal'd to, as undeniable Proofs of their Charge, and Men were call'd upon to observe the Fruits of the Principles of the Reformation, press'd Home to their Consequences. This is the chief Argument in all their Permalives to return to their Communion, and fome of the most insidious among them, as Fiat Lux, Pax vobis, are form'd upon this fingle View, and are only an artificial Proposal of this Argument. I am persuaded it has done them more Service, than all their other Pleas put together. Neither can any juster Account be given of the late Growth of Popery among us (a Fact notorious to the Clergy about London) than the loud and publick Affertion of the Doctrines of the present Scheme, as the real Principles on which the Reformation stands; and reproaching all Princi-Won

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Principles of focial Union in Religion, as Popery.

IN my 9 Preface I infinuated a Conjecture, that possibly the Hand of that Enemy (the Church of Rome) might be concerned in advancing the present Scheme, for which my Correspondent corrects me, as r entring into Mens Thoughts, and charging them upon mere Imagination without Evidence ; a Liberty, by the Way, which he has taken very largely with me. He tells me in Terms far above Conjecture, that, without Doubt, I wou'd set an Example of fubmitting to whatever is, or may be fettled by Authority; and decline the Method of Martyrdom, to prove my Sincerity. This is furely charging without Evidence, and looking into the Heart beyond the possibility of human Inspection. But in Defense of my Suggestion, I take leave to observe, that of nameless Writers we have a Right to make any probable Conjecture. I will

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¹ Pag. 5. T Lett. p. 34. Lett. p. 12.

now be more free, and conjecture that the Author of Grounds and Reasons &c. the Considerer of Literal Scheme &c. and the Letter-Writer are the same Person: And I shall desire the Reader's Observation on the following Peculiarities in those Pieces.

One of the chief Protestant Principles is,—That the Scriptures of the N. T. are the great Christian Rule of Faith and Duty. The present Authority of these Books is represented as precarious, and plainly accidental; such as might as well be given to other Books; rejected as Spurious and Apocryphal. And 'tis determin'd that since 'Christ and his Apostles did not declare these Books to be canonical; (i. e.) the Canon or Rule of Faith and Duty, they cannot be prescribed, or receiv'd as such.

FROM Luther's Apprehension that the Devil endeavour'd to persuade him, that his Designs of Reformation were his

t Grounds and Reasons, &c. p. 14, 15, 16, 17.

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Suggestion, 'tis summarily concluded, that — " the Devil establish'd Prote-stantism.

* Transubstantiation is represented to be as well supported both by Tradition and Miracles, as the Doctrine of a Me-ssiah.

y The Magistrate is excluded from intermeddling in Matters of Religion: And 'tis expresly affirm'd by the same Writer, z that our Reformation was entirely effected by the Civil Power. The plain Consequence from which Premisses is, that our Reformation is unjustifiable, and unwarrantable.

The same Author says, a I do not wonder, that Popery shou'd grow upon us in England, under the Reign of Presbytery, no less than under the Reign of Prelacy; since the Authority of the Church is a Doctrine common to high Presbyterian and high Prelatical Di-

Grounds and Reasons, p. 61. * Literal Scheme, &c. p. 65, 66, 67, 316. Y Lett. 47. 2 p. 6. 2 p. 28. Uines;

vines; and since, if there be any such Thing as absolute Church Authority, it must reside in the Church of Rome. The Term absolute is utterly impertinent, and renders his Reasoning good for nothing; and therefore may justly be suspected, to be thrown in for a Blind. His Argument is this, Presbyterian and Prelatical Divines maintain Church Authority, therefore they lead Men to acknowledge absolute Authority in the Church of Rome. The Term absolute is not in the Premisses, and therefore has nothing to do in the Conclusion. He does not charge either the Prelatical or Presbyterian Divines, with maintaining absolute Church Authority. They maintain a limited Church Authority, in Oppofition to the absolute Authority claimed by the Church of Rome, the only rational Scheme, upon which the Abfurdity of that Church's Claim can be shewn. His Argument requires, that the same Authority which they maintain, must reside in the Church of Rome exclusive of other Churches; they do not maintain an absolute Church Authority, and there-T 3

therefore, unless He will give up his Argument as frivolous, he must drop the Term absolute, and then his Position will be - If there be any fuch Thing as Church Authority, it must reside in the Church of Rome. But let Church Authority be what it will, why must it reside in the Church of Rome, more than in other Christian Churches? This is a distinguishing Doctrine of the Partifans of that Church, and acknowledged by no one elfe. I cou'd add some other Hints of Favour to that Church, but I presume these Passages are a sufficient Ground for so tender a Suspicion as I fuggested, of a Writer whose general Argument is manifestly assistant to the Emissaries of that Church, and who sculks in the dark, as they generally do, either under feign'd Names, or without any, It is no new Thing for them to perfonate Deifts, Enthusiasts, Libertines, or take up any other Mask, that appears conducive to their Deligns. We know they may be dispensed with for any Compliances, for teaching any Doctrines, reviling Popery, or doing any thing, that abnotimay

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may contribute to their Concealment, and the Promotion of their End.

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But whether the Authors of these Doctrines and Schemes of Deisin, now propagated among us, intend it or not, that they serve, that they must serve that Church, and can serve no other, is apparent to all considering Men. And I have my self heard this frank Declaration from Priests of that Church, that they wish no greater Advantage, than to see our People clear'd from all Religions.

In sum, whatever sets Men loose from all Principles of social Union in Religion, prepares them, by a very natural Process, for a Reconciliation to that Church. They may perhaps ramble for some Time in the Paths of Deism, or Enthusiasm, much pleased with their imaginary Liberty; but, if they are Persons of any Resection, they will at length find themselves lost in Uncertainties, and grow weary of wandring without Rule or Guide, seeking Rest and sinding none. By a Mind in this distatisfy'd suctuating

Condition. He who offers the nearest Port, will be the most favourably heard. The Man has injudiciously follow'd his own Reason or Spirit, till he is bewilder'd, loft, and tired, and knows not where he is. He has not Patience to trace himself back to the Point from which he erred, and recollect his proper Rule: This is a work which requires too much Pains and Attention. He wants present Repose, and is, in that State, easily led into the great Snare of that Church, and perfuaded to put a short End to his Labours. and lay himself to Sleep, under the Protection of their pretended Infallibility. Such a Wanderer may perhaps fet out with a great Abhorrence of Poperv. and think every Step he takes leads him farther from it; but He retires in a Circle. and, when he has fetch'd his Compais, is brought at length to the very Point He fled from. That Church has its Instruments, fitted and instructed to begin, carry on, and finish this whole Scheme among us: Some, as I have faid, under the Masks of Deism or Enthusiasm, to draw Men off from all Principles of Uni-

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on, and persuade them that Religion is a Matter merely personal: And when they are fingled out from the Flock, to lead them on into the Wilderness of Confusion; and when they are well intangled there, others are ready to offer their Affistance, to observe to them, that they have only follow'd the Principles of the Reformation to their natural Confequences: And if they will ever be at rest in their Religion, they must repose themselves in the Bosom of that Church And I am persuaded, more Converts have been carried to Rome this artful round about Way, than by direct Applications. Backes Wurk dren mun perhaps let out

I do not say, that all who advance these Doctrines and Principles, are Emissaries of that Church, and act under its Direction: But the long Experience we have had of the Wiles and Stratagems of that insidious Enemy, is always a Ground for Suspicion. But whether they only act a Part, or really are what they profess, the manifest Tendency of their Works to promote the Designs of that Adversary, are a just Reason for our Leagislatures

Legislatures Care to guard against them: who are equally concern'd to guard the Publick from the Effects of a dangerous Action, whether 'tis done out of Malice, or Ignorance. To their Wisdom I leave it to judge of the Danger, and to provide against it. I assure my felf, they will distinguish between Liberty and Licentionsness; and are not to be deluded into an Approbation of the one, by being complimented as Patrons of the other. This is an old beaten Track. and on this Topick we find the b Popish Priest aforementioned, extolling Oliver and his Army, in as high Panegyricks as cou'd be given to mortal Men-Oliver was too discerning, not to see the Inconveniences and Danger of that wild Spirit in his Army; but the Situation in which his Villanies had placed him, made it necessary for him to humour it. He had encouraged and promoted it, as the most effectual Engin for the Work of Subversion; and while there was any Thing to be pulled down, it was of

b Christian Moderator, Part 1st. p. 4.24. Part 3d. p. 23.

excellent Service to him; nothing could stand before it. When he had subdued the Monarchy and Church by it He turn'd it against Presbytery, whose Schemes flood in his Way. Thus far there was some Point of Opposition, in which the various Factions were united; But when there was nothing more to destroy, and He wanted to build up fome regular frame of Government and Religion, under the Power he had affumed, their dissonant, incoherent Schemes grew very troublesome to him, and broke his Measures. He then saw the Necessity of Principles of Union and Order, and particularly in Matters of Religion, as the d Historian observes, He wou'd often speak, that there was much of Good in the Order of Bishops, if the Dross was scour'd off.

WHAT Oliver himself wish'd, but was disabled, by this Spirit of Liberty false so call'd, from effecting, we have the Happiness to see establish'd in our

d Clarendon, Book 15,

present Constitution, upon a better Foot than it was possible for him to have placed it: Our antient Form of Civil Government, and a Protestant Episcopal Church mutually supporting each other, with all the Indulgence to different Perfuafions in Religion which can be defired by reasonable, or allow'd by wife Men. And do our present Schematists think, that our Prince and Senate will be perfuaded, to break this excellent Frame in Pieces, only to try a chimerical Project, whose first Step must throw us into the utmost Confusion, and wou'd probably deliver us up a Prey to an Enemy, who watches every Advantage, and knows how to improve it, and cannot wish for a greater than such an Experiment must give him.

In the Protection of every Subject in his legal Liberties we shall ever applaud our Prince, and all who are in Authority under him: But these Gentlemen have fully explain'd what they mean by Liberty; a Liberty which, it seems, cannot consist with the present

or any other Establishment; but requires all Religion to be left a Matter merely personal. This is the Liberty which the Author of Literal Scheme &c. contends for in Terms: This I oppose, and this my Correspondent must vindicate, if he will refute my Censures. I observe only farther, that 'tis with the Patronage of this Liberty these Gentlemen must be understood to Compliment his late Majesty, of glorious Memory; (i. e.) with an Inclination or Intention to Subvert the establish'd Church, and leave all Religion a Matter merely personal: A Slander which might be expected from the Mouths of his profess'd Enemies, but cannot be heard without the Resentment of his Friends.

THAT excellent Prince whom the Providence of God has rais'd up, to be the Ornament of our Throne, and the Preserver of our Constitution, is too Wise to admit, and too Just to deserve such PRAISE. He is too well acquainted with our Church and its Principles, to be imposed on by any invidious Representations

Assess as can produce nothing

of it. And has most gratiously declared his Affection to it, and a Resolution to make its Encouragement and Security his first and always his chief Care. He knows that its Interests are infeparable from his own, and, which are yet dearer to him, the Interests of this Nation. That for the Preservation of this Religion the Succession was limited to his illustrious House, and all the Popish Line excluded from the Crown. And tho' his Care extends to the whole Reformation, yet the great Branch of it on which he stands, is the CHURCH of ENGLAND, which He will not fuffer to be cut away under his Feet. He fees the Danger, and abhors the Patronage, of fuch pretended Principles of Liberty, as can produce nothing but Confusion, and which, whether design'd or not, must give his and our Enemies the greatest Advantage, and open the only Door by which, in all human Probability, they can ever enter upon us.

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CONCLUSION.

aced out, I think, to the Attendance

Hope I have gratify'd my Corre-Spondent's Defire, deliver'd my Sentiments a plainly and clearly; and given him a Scheme of Authority free from either Hobbism or Popery. On ecclefiaftical Authority I have formerly publish'd my Thoughts pretty largely, to which I refer the Reader. From the short Sketches I have incidentally given of my Sentiments on that Subject in the preceding Reflections, I prefume it may appear, that the Submission I claim to Authority, is not in the least injurious to any Right or Liberty of private Judgment, belonging to any one as a Man, or a Christian. 'That 'tis a fallacious Infinuation, that either we must

a Lett. p. 80.

affert an unlimited implicit Submission to Authority, or none at all. That there is a plain obvious Medium between these Extremes, which I have pointed out, I think, to the Apprehenfion of any common Understanding. I cannot be more explicit, than I have been, in affigning the proper Subject of that Measure of Authority which I affert. And as to the Difficulties and Perplexities which the b Letter-writer supposes will attend Mens Debates on this Question, I think any honest Man with an ordinary Capacity is very equal to them. But will he perfuade us, that his Scheme will be attended with fewer? That if all the c common People, whom he requires me to direct in this Point, were to purfue his Method of private Judgment in their Inquiries of Religion, upon their own unaffisted Strength, and under a Restraint from ever affenting to any Thing upon Authority, they wou'd be less intangled, better fecured from Error and Abfur-

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b Lett. p. 80, 81. cp. 80.

dity, than by confulting fuch Guides, as my Scheme refers them to, and trusting their Authority, within the Limits I prescribe to it?

As to the Civil Establishment of Religion, the proper Subject of these Papers,

frate as fuch I affert no Submission of Judgment at all in Questions of Religion.

gistrate, to compel or force any Man to profess the Religion establish'd.

adly, I admit that a Toleration of other Religions besides that establish'd, in some Circumstances, and under proper Restrictions, may be reasonable, prudent, and necessary.

Bur then I affirm,

of, That the Magistrate may establish such Religion as he approves, (i. e.) may support the Administrations of it by Acts of Munissicence, and encourage the Profession of it by Distinctions of Favour; ascertain these Favours by Law, and protect the Possession of them from Insults and Invasion.

2dly, THAT He may justly prohibit and restrain such Sects or Professions of Religion, as manifestly endanger the Civil Peace of the Society, and proportion the Penalties of such Restraint to the Appearances of Danger.

as well as Reasons of Civil Prudence, may justly determine him, to restrain and punish the Publication of Blasphemy, Prophaness, all Principles that tend to set Men loose from all Bonds of Religion, or corrupt the Virtue of the Society.

any Community has concluded the Establishment blishment of any Religion, that Conclufion is equally exempted from the publick Opposition and Debate of private Subjects with any other enacted Conclusion of the same Importance.

Lastly, That publick Disputations of the Truth of an establish'd Religion, or any Article of it, so far as the Peace of the Community may be affected by them, are properly cognizable by the Magistrate.

These are my general Conclusions on this Subject, which I have endeavour'd to explain and support, and hope I am able to defend. d My Correspondent has prepared me to expect his farther Animadversions; and as he has been very free, in prescribing to my Conduct in this Dispute, I shall take the same Liberty with him.

1. I except against all Opinions of private Writers as Evidence in this Que-

d Lett. p. 83.

ftion; because, tho' I am persuaded those he has alledg'd, when truly understood, wou'd do him no Service, but wou'd disown the Conclusions to which he calls them, yet the Examination of them wou'd trifle away a deal of Time in fruitless Wrangles of Criticism, and Quotations, to fettle their Meaning. And when that was done, we shou'd not be one Jot nearer the Decision of the Points really in Question than we were before. The Justice or Injustice of a Civil Establishment of Religion depends on moral Principles, and must be shewn from them; and we may as well call Witneffes to a Problem in Mathematicks, instead of producing its proper Demonstration, as attempt to prove or disprove this Conclusion by Testimony. I promife him, to allow any Arguments the fame Weight from his Mouth, as I wou'd from any other Person's. If they are pertinent and conclusive, they will be equally fo, whoever proposes them; and if they are not good, no Names, of what Character foever, will make them fo.

THE

THE Expediency or Inexpediency of a Civil Establishment of Religion, with Respect to the Peace and Welfare of Society, is indeed a Subject of prudential Confideration, in which Experience and the Judgment of wife Men may deserve our Regard; but this Question has been refolv'd in the Affirmative by the concurrent Wisdom of all Legislators, in all Ages, and under all Kinds of Government, neither have they found Reason in fo many Thousand Years Experience to depart from this Conclusion: And therefore, suppose his Authors really to agree in Judgment with him, yet the Opinions of a few speculative Men, unfupported by any Experience, when put in the Scale against such an Authority as this, will be lighter than Vanity it felf. And as to our own Establishment in particular, I prefume the Approbation of our Legislature is a better Argument for it, than any mere Authority can be against it.

2. I defire him to keep to the real Merits of the Question, and not ramble into U 3 inci-

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incidental Debates of little or no Importance to it.

3. I demand the Justice from him, to take my Positions as limited and explain'd by my self. To answer what I do say, and not make me say what he imagines he can answer. And particularly where I have consider'd and reply'd to an Objection, not to repeat it over again, without a due Notice of the Reply.

I am not so fond of Disputation as this Gentleman seems to be. I have, according to my Abilities, settled my Rule of Faith and Duty, and I believe, have admitted as sew Conclusions of Concern to me without Examination, as he has done. I confess, I never thought any Conclusion the better for being new; or that, to vindicate the Liberty of my own Understanding, I ought to contradict other Mens: And generally have observed more of Vanity, Envy, or Resentment in such Contradictions, than of rational Conviction.

On the contrary, it has always been a Pleasure to me, to find my own Reasonings approve the Determinations of those who have gone before me in any Subject. And I prefume, I have acted with as much Freedom of Judgment, in the Belief of those Articles, to which I have profes'd my Assent in Obedience to Authority, as any one has done in opposing them. I have no Doubt in any Point of this Question which may concern my Conduct, and therefore want no farther Debate for my Satisfaction. My Principles appear to me in as much Light as any can do; neither can I perceive that I have made any wrong Deduction from them. I affure this Gentleman I have no Ambition to make a Noise in the World, and desire nothing in it so much as to spend the Remainder of my Life in Quiet: But if I can contribute any Thing to the Honour of that God whom I ferve, or to the Religion, Virtue, or Happiness of my Country, the little Service I am able to do. shall not be wanting. I think them all to be nearly interested in the Question U 4 I have I have now consider'd; and if He has any Thing farther to offer on it, which shall appear to deserve Attention, and to proceed from a fincere Defire to find Truth, it shall not be neglected. God has given him very good natural Capacities; and I perceive, he has employed a great deal of Time among Books: And, if I thought him in earnest, I wou'd advife him, in his much reading to read a little Logick, and learn to distinguish and infer: Talents in which he is often defective, and without which, Inquiries will only perplex him, but never clear out any Thing. But I confess I suspect his Sincerity. I cannot perfuade my felf, that a Person of his Understanding can really believe, that the Scheme He proposes for regulating the World, is practicable, or that the very first Step of the Experiment cou'd be made in this Nation, without throwing us into the utmost Confusion, and exposing us to certain Ruin. And even in Holland it felf, He might as reasonably advise them to cut down their Banks, and let in the Sea, that every one might fail where he pleas'd

pleas'd without Interruption, as to reverse their Establishment, and take off those Restrictions, by which their Toleration is now regulated. There is no Man of any Reflection but must perceive, what Interest these Schemes must promote. Whether this unknown Writer intends it or not, can be only Matter of Conjecture; but if he has no other View than to amuse his Leisure with Controversy, and throw out Bones of Contention only to see what Squabble he can raise about them, he ought to know, that the Subjects in which he takes this Liberty, are fuch in which the Affections of Men are and will be engaged with Zeal, and the Peace and Happiness of his Country must be very much endanger'd by their Contests about them. And what Sport foever it may be to him, to fet us together by the Ears, he cannot be furprifed, if he is consider'd by our Laws as a publick Incendiary.

8 (1993)

POT SOUD WASHING SACRATE AND Section 2 Something the Section 1 ि समाप्ति । जाना केने एका एक स्वरूप के किया है कि स्वरूप ह A SANT TO SHOW WON A MODERN how and no sales who to how on Mindle come showing the grown ovinging Working the blocker to be buy the Williams A State A South The sale will be the training of the sale will be the sale will be the sale with the sale will be the sale w of the View of the Control of the Edition MARKET DESCRIPTION OF A PROPERTY OF A PROPER the subsect of the subsection of the Shirth of Courses, profit limester Decreased a second of the family our worthis was a sea of Danger of Stan Jan 100 Carlot State of the A delication of the State of the Stat S. Mar doan't smale from The second second second second second collinia in complete out of home want thing ace convous sight excellent Socionia free



A

LETTER

FROM THE

Rev. Dr. MARSHAL jun.

TO THE Rev. Dr. ROGERS,

Upon Occasion of his Preface to his Eight Sermons, with the Answer of Dr. ROGERS to the same.

My dear Friend,



Am very forry that I could not find Leisure for digesting upon Paper those Doubts and Scruples, which I told you stuck

with me, upon some Passages in the Preface to your eight excellent Sermons, before you had finished your Scheme of its Desense. Had I sooner acquitted my self of my Promise to you, and thereby obtain'd your Answer to the Dissiculties I started; I should have made, I am sensible, a good Bargain for my self, whatever I had done for you, by procuring your more explicit Thoughts in exchange for my own.

χρύσεα χαλκείων, έκατόμβοι έννεαβοίων.

Hom. II. B. 2.

But as, upon the Perusal you have since indulged to me of your valuable Performance, I find, that my Objections, so far as they related to the Case of Establishments and of private Judgment, had been in View with you, before you receiv'd those Objections from me; I shall not trouble the World or you with a needless circumstantial Detail of them; but shall tell you in a more summary Way, what I think upon that Subject; as well wherein I concur intirely with you, as wherein I hesitate.

I. THEN; I agree with you in Opinion, that there shou'd be an establish'd Religion; i. e. a Religion which the Magistrate (or the Civil Power, wherever lodged) should take into his more immediate Protection, and Encouragement. If there be divers Questions at any time upon the Carpet, each of them claiming his Affent and Approbation; he must refort to his own Private Judgment, and Conscience. which, out of the many, shall stand best intituled to his Preference. When He hath fettled this Matter within his own Mind; the Laws He shall make in Favour of any such Establishment, seem to me fubfifting upon an equal Foot of Respect and Deference from the Subject. with all other Laws of Confequence and Importance. Thus far we do in no manner disagree. Municipal Laws, how trivial foever in their intrinsick Value, and in the Subject Matter of them, are never to be insulted; never to be treated with Buffoonery and Banter, Ridicule or Sarcastick Irony. So that your grand Adversary will have from me no Measure of Encou-

Encouragement to his manner of dealing with our present Establishment. Neither Greeks nor Romans, nor any Civilized Nation, which I have yet heard, or read of, would have born it. A fober, ferious, and modest Inquiry into the Reasons of any Establishment, is all which I am concern'd to vindicate. Now where a Populace is so much interested as it is with us, in the Legislature; I have not ordinarily found it judged inconsistent with the Duty of a Private Subject, to propose his Doubts or his Reasons to the Publick in a modest Way, concerning the Repeal of any Law, which he may think of ill Consequence by its Continuance. If he be a Man of Abilities, and well versed in the Argument; he will deserve some Attention: But if he mistakes his Talent. and will be bufy with what he very little understands; Contempt and Odium will be his unavoidable, and just, Allotments.

INDEED as Religion is a thing of the highest Moment to every Man; any defign'd Abuse of it is to be consider'd as a common Injury. But still as it is more a

personal Affair, in which every Man hath a peculiar Right and Interest, and Concern that he be not mistaken, than any other Case, or Instance which can possibly fall under the Cognisance of the Magistrate; Greater Allowances seem due to each Private Person for Examination and Inquiry in this, than in any other Example. I am far from thinking it, with your Adversary, a Matter merely personal, wherein the Magistrate hath no Interest, no Right to meddle. The Welfare of his People depends too much upon it, to justify his Indisference or Coldness to it. But

How far He may, or may not, claim a Right of inflicting positive Penalties upon such as express their Dissent from him, tho' in a decent manner, is, with me, the only Question. That He may bestow his Encouragements and Favours upon the Scheme he thinks most deserving of them, and consequently, according to you, may establish that Way of Religion and Worship, is past all Doubt with both of us. But if the Magistrate may punish at all (except by withholding Favours, which

are intirely in his Disposal) He may punish (for ought I can fee) to the utmost Extremity. Because, as I before had hinted to you, the Measure of Punishments may, and indeed ought to, vary with the Occafions which demand them, and with the likelyhoods of removing, or fencing against, the Evils they are defign'd to prevent or remedy. Yet you remember (I dare fay) a Tertullian's Plea to the Magistrates of his Time, which will be alike extensive, in the Reason of it, to the Magistracy of All Times— It is not the Business of any Religion to force, or to drive you, into it. And in the 4th Century, when Christianity was establish'd, the Church, you know, declared her Abhorrence of reforting to the Magistrate for the Punishment of an Heresy, which yet she consider'd as detestable; and accordingly excommunicated Idacius Bishop of Merida, for applying to the Secular Power, in

^{*} See the whole Passage in his Address to Scapula Ch.

2. Cateros & ipsi putatis Deos esse quos nos Damonas scimus:

Tamen humani Juris & naturalis potestatis est uniquiq; quod
putaverit colere; nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio. Sed
nec religionis est cogere religionem; qua sponte suscipi debeat non vi: cam & hostia ab animo libenti expostulentur.

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the Case of Priscillian; whom she had (her self however) excommunicated, or (in your own Words) declared and marked out, as a Person to be avoided for his Blasphemies and Errors.

SINGLE Examples are, I confes, no decifive Arguments; yet it may not be amifs to confider the Behaviour of the first Christian Emperor, the famous Confantine, upon his embracing the Christian Religion, and establishing it by all the Marks of Favour and Munificence, which his great Zeal for it could induce him to bestow upon it. He came into it, not as many of his Successors did, and as the Bulk of our People generally do, because He faw it establish'd; but because upon Views of Conscience and Conviction, He faw it fit to be establish'd. Yet I have no where hear'd or read, that He filenced all Opposition to it, from the Gentile Philosophers; but was content with the utmost Demonstrations He cou'd give, that with him, it had the Preference. And this was his way of establishing it. But He did not inflict any positive Punish ments ments upon its ferious Opponents; tho' he might, and did, protect, or ought at least to have protected, its ferious Professors, from all Appearances of Insult and Outrage. I flatter my self, that we do not much differ from each other upon the Case thus stated.

2. I agree again with you, that Civil Peace, with whatever of any Kind or Nature the Magistrate may judge likely to affect or hurt it, is properly within his Care and Cognifance. You have produced two Instances of this fort, (one foreign, the other domestick) wherein the Civil Peace was judged to be interested by Religious Disputes. Now it must here be confessed that the Passions of Men are ever apt to mix themselves with all these Disputations. But must none be therefore permitted? The Disputants in both the Cases you have offered were certainly wrong; and the Magistrate, instead of silencing, might have punish'd each of them, for their Breach of the Civil Peace, if they were really guilty of its Violation. Our Laws will punish the Author of a Libel

a Libel, whether, in the Main of his Question, he be right or mistaken; and yet the executive Power may well and wifely confider in fuch a Cafe, which of the two, equally (suppose) fierce, Disputers, shall have the largest Meafure of its Indulgence. So that tho' I would fecure to the Magistrate, all that Right, and humbly recommend to him. all that Duty of Tuition, with which he is entrusted, for the Service of the Publick Religion, committed to his Care: tho' I should always be glad, (as at present I rejoyce) to fee him, encouraging it with all favourable Tokens of his Regard to it; and the I conceive, with Submission, the Defense of it from lewd Infults and ludicrous Cavils, to be perfectly within his Province; yet I never desire to see him fencing it in with fo thick an Hedge, as shall exclude all Light, and shall tear out the Eyes of fuch as endeavour to fee thro' it. This, I dare fay, you no more desire than I do. Sober arguing I never fear: Mockery and bitter railing, if I could help it, I would never bear, either for the Truth, or against it.

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3. Your

3. Your Distinction between a general and a special Call must be acknowledg'd to have great Weight in it; and I freely own to you, that it hath precluded me from diverse Exceptions, which I had taken to your Arguments, before I attended to it. But what at last can this amount to, under the mere Light of Nature? What Advantage (e.g.) could a Socrates have deriv'd from it, under the Persuasion which posses'd him, that the Religion of his Country was, all over, erroneous? Nor he, nor any Man in his Situation, could have pleaded any Thing farther in Apology for his Opposition to it, than the great Law of Nature, a general Benevolence to human Kind, and consequently the Rescue of it from pernicious Errors, as all (mere) pretended Revelations must be allow'd to be; tho' they may contain in them many Articles and Precepts of Use and Service to human Life. But as every fuch Revelation will be apt to mislead its votaries and Adherents in their Notions of God and his Providence, and the Manner of his Dealings

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Dealings with them, and the Terms of their Acceptance; so far the Man who believes it false, will believe it burtful; and for any Thing useful which may be contain'd in it, the Man of natural Religion will tell you, you may find it in his Scheme. Socrates, then, endowed, as he was, with rare Talents of Mind, improv'd by deep Thought and Study, had an undoubted Opportunity before him of doing much Good in his Generation, which, in a mere State of Nature, I must have leave to intitle a Call to do it. Any Man so appearing, must risque, I confess, the Confequence, if mere Pride of Understanding, Itch of Novelty, and Fantastry of Opinion, be His leading Motives; and He will be fure to feel it, in his Credit, Eafe, Fortune, or, as Times may happen to be, in his very Life. But whom do we now condemn? Socrates, or his Judges? And what shall we fay to the Case at large of our Reformers? I doubt, you will be thought to have left them too naked and defenfelefs.

THE Instance you have deduced from our Factories, is exceedingly pertinent X 3 and

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and well pointed; the Chaplains of which have certainly no special Call, to convert either Turks or Papists; they are indeed under stipulated Restraints, and would find no Admission without a strict Regard to them. So that with much Probability of Mischief, they would be in no Likelyhood of doing any Good by their officious Endeavours. It is recorded of our Saviour himself, even in his own Country, that He did not many mighty Works there, because of their Unbelief. b He might have done them much Hurt, by inflaming the Guilt of their groß Neglects: But as he faw their Bent and Prejudice, he left them, as he found them, to take their Fate.

4. AGAIN, I agree with you that the Church of Christ, as separate from the State, ought to be consider'd in a View of Distinction from it, and as a Society, which hath (what all Societies must have) proper Bands of Union; upon a Breach of which, she may declare

Mdtth. xiii. 58.

any Person breaking them, as no longer in her Fellowship. This will enable the Persons entrusted with the Depositum of the Gospel, to guard it from Innovations and destructive Errors; and to warn their People of any danger, which may be apprehended likely to arife from them. Were the Civil Magistrate in this Case neuter, and did he no otherwise interpofe, than by his Protection of the Church in her regular Exercise of this Authority; no Grievance, I should think, could be here complain'd of. The Favour or Displeasure of God in another World are no otherwise supposed to be interested in fuch a Cenfure, or fuch a Declaration. than as the Person affected by it receives the Admonition, duly or unduly, behaves agreeably or difagreeably to the Rules of this, or any other, Society. And the supposed Neutrality of the Magistrate as to Civil Penalties, would then leave fuch a Person easy and secure from them.

I shall give you no farther Trouble upon this Head; but beg Leave to proceed upon another; and,

X 4

II. To

II. To offer you some few Remarks upon what you have advanced concerning the Argument of Miracles in your eight excellent Sermons; which truly deserve the most hearty Thanks of all who wish well to the Establishment or Propagation of the Gospel. Yet even upon this noble Subject, a Way of reasoning occurs to me in your b Preface, whereupon I would desire your farther Thoughts.

I consider the several Vouchers to the Christian Religion (begin at which you will, for I am not now concerned for the Order of them, I consider 'em I say) as a Chain of Proofs, the Amount of which, when taken altogether, renders the Belief of it so very reasonable, the Truth of it so highly credible, that it hath all the Degrees of Probability, which form in the Mind, what we call a moral Certainty. If you take one or more Links out of this Chain; the Chain perhaps will not be

destroy'd, tho' it will be weaken'd, more or less, as the Particular so taken from it is of more or less Importance and Strength. Thus Miracles, and Prophecies, and the intrinsick Usefulness and Excellence of the Christian Precepts, and the worthy Representation it hath exhibited to us, of the divine Attributes, and the Answer it hath furnish'd to many general Expectations, and the Supply it hath given to diverse pressing Wants, do, all, contribute, in their respective Proportions, to fill up the Measure of this Evidence, and raise it to an Height very little short of strict Demonstration.

AMONG these, the Proof from Miracles seems best indeed accommodated to general and common Use, because originally sounded in the Evidence of Sense. And when a Report of them is conveyed to us from distant Ages, tho' the Evidence arising from this Report cannot, I think, be afferted equal to the Evidence of our own Senses; yet, the Faith of History, which is an obvious and easy Consideration, may very well serve instead

stead of it, and be sufficient to fix upon our Minds a reasonable and strong Conviction, which may and ought to govern our Practice. But then whatever be the real Amount of this Proof: it must always proceed in Concurrence with, not in Contradiction to the reft. It may indeed convey to us the Notices of somewhat new; fomewhat, with which we might not otherwise have been acquainted; but it must never be allowed to thwart our natural Notions of Things. nor to cross upon common Sense. The Proof hence arising is plainly then not d absolute, but limited and conditional: Therefore I would lay upon it no farther Weight than what it will fairly bear; I would not, I mean, unnecessarily overload it with the Support of every, or of any Thing, which is merely e possible to be true. The Proofs of the Christian Religion, even when taken altogether, do, in my humble Apprehension, rise no higher than to a moral Certainty, or to the very highest Degree of Probability;

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d see Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. e Pref. p. 29.

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which, yet, is fully fufficient to claim our Affent, and to regulate the Measures of practical Life; and we must be highly criminal in the Sight of God. if we do not suffer it to have the same Effect with us, which like Evidence is apt to produce in all other Cases. I intirely a. gree with you, that Miracles, without any Prophecy, or any preceding Revelation, had been fufficient Vouchers to the Truth of the Christian Religion; because the Christian Religion, in its native Purity, contains in it no Counter-balance to that Evidence; nothing unworthy of God. or affrontive to common Sense. But now could it ever be supposed, that a Miracle had been wrought authorizing the Application of any Prophecy to a Meaning far remote from all the Rules of common Sense, the Genius of Language, the Construction of Words, and the Contexture of the whole Discourse: I must acknowledge to you, that I should feel my felf under great and pinching Difficulties, how to determine my Assent in so perplex'd a Case. Since from the Miracle, there would be a very high

high Probability, that fuch an Application should be true; and from common Sense as high a Probability, that such an Application should be erroneous. What then must be done to balance Accounts? I would chuse, I confess, to narrow my Bottom as little as possible, and to keep clear, if I could, of fuch a fcurvy Dilemma; which I conceive very eafy to be done in the Question before us. If you had only offer'd thus much uponit; that in merely doubtful Cases, where nothing on either fide occurred repugnant to the known Use of Language, and the plain Rules of Discourse; the credible Report of a Miracle wrought to authorize the Application of a Prophecy this way or that, ought to determine us in Favour of fuch an Application; this would have carried with it no Appearance of Difficulty, nor given any Colour for Objection. But Cases merely possible, may be big with Abfurdity, and grievously offensive to common Sense. They may be so to such an enormous degree, that even the furest Evidence of Miracles in their Favour, could not, in Point

Point of Reason, counterbalance the natural Evidence against them. But, I think, we may well avoid this Difficulty, which to me, as I have own'd to you, would be a very great one, in the present Article; and I hope, without weakning, in any manner, the Argument which is drawn from a friet and proper Application of diverse Prophecies in the Old Testament to the Case and Person of the Messiah, and to that whole Occonomy which was to take Place under his Administration. A Series of these I had my felf collected, and prepared, in some Measure, for publick View, when I heard that our most learned Defender of Christianity, the Right Reverend the Bishop of Litchfield, and our common Friend, the acute and learned Dean of Chichester, now most defervedly nominated to the See of Bangor, wou'd render any of my lower Thoughts upon that Subject needless and superfluous. But certainly there is fuch a Series and Thred of Predictions, which are applicable (altogether) to no Cafe nor Perfon in the World, but to the Messiah only. Be it, that some of them are dark and

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and enigmatical; Yet, if a Treatise were deliver'd to me in Cypher, and, by some one Key, or Rule of Interpreting, and by no other which could be found, a just, uniform, and consistent Sense, should come from it; I should with all Reason conclude that Sense to be the true one, and that Way of Decyphering regular and desensible. This would be a reasonable Conclusion, and the just Foundation of a moral Certainty; not, however, exclusive of a mere physical Possibility, that all might be at last mistaken.

Our Adversaries, you will say, are not concerned to make any Sense at all of such a Treatise; they would rather there shou'd be none in it. Yet still a stated Rule of Interpretation, which shall tally, not with one or two, but with all the Marks and Characters of a certain Person, described in it, and afterwards appearing with them, all, about him, and no other Person appearing to rival him in all, (This, I still insist) would support my Inference that He is that Person; and it must be an Affront upon common Sense.

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to reject the Construction of his be-

But I mean not to take this Argument out of Hands fo much more able than my own are, to vindicate and support it. I would only add by way of Relief to the Difficulty I have mention'd, that it appears from all the Accounts we have of the Jews, their Manner and Genius, their Tafte and Learning, in, and about, the Times of our Messiah; they were become fo infinitely fond of their Canonical Scripture, that they were willing to ascribe, if possibly they could, some Degree of Propheticalness, or of uncommon Sanctity and Significancy, to every Line and Word and Syllable contained in it. It was their Bell-Lettre, their Classical, indeed, one may fay, in a manner, all their Learning. They were in truth fond of it even to Superstition. They scrupulously spent a great deal of their Time in reading, transcribing, and in enabling themselves to repeat it memoriter, or, as we fay, by Heart. Nor is it inconfistent with this Remark, that

we find our Saviour taxing some of them with a gross Neglect of it: Since they really neglected the Life and Spirit of it; whilft the Outlide, the Sound, and every Letter in it, were so exceedingly in Vogue with them. Now as we frequently apply Passages taken out of our most celebrated Writers to Purposes which were never in View with those Writers; as we are accustomed to dress up our Sense in their Language, and accommodate their Words to our Meaning; fo, what we thus do by those Authors, out of Delicacy, or to shew our Acquaintance with them, or to testify our Respect for them; the same did the Jews by their Law and their Prophets; they afcribed indeed to them a farther Extent, and Compass, and Copiousness of Meaning, than what perhaps was strictly true or defensible; they shou'd seem to have thought their facred Writers intending, in diverse Passages, a Sense, to which those Passages are only applicable by way of Allusion or Accommodation. That it might be fulfilled &c. was a way with them of expressing this simple Idea; "So then was fully ve-" rifyed

"rifyed fuch a Passage in this or that " Prophet; it is as true in this Instance, "as it was formerly in another; it is as "fairly applicable to this, as heretofore " it was strictly and properly to its origi-" nal Occasion." Any Man who looks into the Writings of Philo Judaus, an Author (you know) cotemporary, in the former Part of his Life, with our Saviour, will never wonder at this Liberty of allegorizing, nor bear hard upon the Memory of Christ and his Apostles, for the Use they made of it. It was the Mode and Fashion of speaking and writing then much in Vogue with the People they first address'd to: And furely the Apostles and Evangelists might with all Reason and Decency be allow'd to deal with them in the Way most likely to gain upon them; to argue fometimes with them merely ad hominem, upon Premisses which, being allow'd, wou'd indeed support the Conclusion drawn from them; but upon their being difallowed, or disputed, no Consequence wou'd follow. Therefore this way of arguing was of Use and Service in the Case

Case of the Jews only; and accordingly the Gentiles were not accosted with it.

This is the way wherein, without farther Trouble or Entanglement, I would chuse to hit off the Difficulty now under Consideration.

Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice (Nodus Inciderit- Horat. de Art. Poetic.

In which Citation, as well as in my Entrance upon this long Letter to you, you have a Specimen of somewhat which I have offered to you, upon the present Article—

III. A few Thoughts upon the Subject of Authority shall release you, and bring me to a Conclusion. I am not aware that I have one Word to offer upon this Argument which crosses upon any thing advanced by my self or you; otherwise than as it bears some Relation to my sirst Particular; or may seem (for it can only seem)

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feem) to interfere with the Liberty of private Judgment.

Is every Man had always reason'd rightly, and purfued the Dictates of fuch Reasoning exactly; I do not see what Occasion there would have been either for Ecclefiaftical or Civil Authority. I do not fee, why, under fuch Circumstances, the mere Religion of Nature might nor have sufficed for all the Intents and Purposes of human Life. But alas! these Circumstances are altogether imaginary. Men have not fo used their Reason, nor fo followed the Refults of it. Nor hath the Religion of Nature subfished in any Time or Place upon its own fingle Bottom. When God did not, Man would, interpole to modify, and alter, to feace and to enclose it. So that an Ecclesiastical Establishment of some fort or other hath been always found necessary, and accordingly hath always been reforted to in Use and Practice; which way of Confidering Mankind, from Views of Experience, is a great deal more fure and just, than any Estimate taken of them from Y 2 mere

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mere Speculation, or, I know not what chimerical Poffibilities Authority then being once supposed, (for the Fact is indiffrutable that fuch a Claim is made and exercised, and our Church afferts it to her self in & Controversies of Faith) the great Question will be what Right's appertain to it, what Liberties are abridged by it, and what Measures of Respect or Deference are due to it. This Authority is of Persons commission'd and intrusted to preserve the Depositum of the Gospel in its Truth and Purity, to guard it, when endanger'd by the fubtle Craft of such as lye in wait to deceive, to explain it in doubtful Cases, and, in fine, to be in Readiness for its Service upon all Emergencies. The common Prefumption here will be, from the Nature of their Office, Education, manner of Life, Study, &c. that they are fitter than others ordinarily are for these feveral Purposes, and besides have a Call which authorizes their Pretentions. Abfolute Submission they disclaim intirely,

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Art. 20. Vid. p. 8. bale annea supplied to the series

as what cannot be due to fallible Men; and it must farther be acknowledged that the Measures of Respect, or Deserence or Relyance of their People on their Skill and Judgment, will and ought to be diversifyed, proportionably to the different Degrees of Internal Light and Evidence, which their People for themselves may severally attain to. Yet the Decencies of Respect may surely be preserved, where an implicit Resignation cannot be expected. Put a similar Case in Medicine, and see how it will come out.

WE have, you know, a College of Physicians, authoriz'd by Royal Power, who are to be educated in a particular manner, and are to judge upon the Abilities of Persons, who shall be permitted to practice in that Profession, within a determin'd District. Suppose these Gentlemen (thus authorized) should, with united Sentiments, declare for any Regimen in particular Cases, or publish their Opinions for a Course of Medicines, in such general Views as should happen to come before them, and these designed

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in express Opposition to some Empirical Practice: It is not (I confess) in such a Case impossible, that a Man no way related to the College, nor educated in the Manner prescribed by it, should, in the Course of his private Studies, hit upon fomewhat which they have missed of: perhaps think better than they have done upon it, and, when a Man bends his Thoughts to a particular Point, in Oppolition to fuch as have Views more enlarged and general, it is not quite improbable, that He may sometimes have on his Side the truer and righter Side of the Question. But what will be the just Consequence of these mere general Poffibilities, or of the few Instances which may happen to arife even of Probabilities? shall every Quack be hence allowed to infult the Authority by which these Gentlemen act? Or shall he be obliged to offer his Doubts and his Objections, if he hath any, in a fober and modest manner, and if they are answer'd, or thought worth answering, be permitted (as I agree he shou'd be permitted) to reply with a becoming Deference? I wou'd not,

not, in this Case, stop his Mouth, tho' I would his Infolence and Scurrility, if it were in my Power.

and so teles College i solbieducated in the Put the like Case in the other Profession of Law. I would say, I had just Authority to act fo or fo, if any Gentleman of the long Robe, eminent for his Skill in his proper Business, shou'd advise me to do so; much more if I had a Concurrence of Opinions from Persons equally eminent in the fame Business; more still, if a Judge of the Bench shou'd judicially declare his Sentiments upon my Question; but most of all, if the whole Bench of Judges should be unanimous in any fuch Declaration. What should I then have to do, but to conceive it Law, and to act pursuant to it? with the it is not ask on the order that

Suppose me now to have studyed the Law, like a Selden, a Nottingham, an Aylesford, or a Trever, and to have struck out of the Practice, or even never to have enter'd into it, but only to have been a filent Observer of the Rules

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and Measures which obtain in it : I might certainly be permitted to offer my Reafons, in any Case of Consequence requiring them, why I did believe the Law to stand somewhat differently from the common and received Notion of it. Even this, however, should be done with a due Regard to the Authority of the proper (and ordinary) Judges. But shall every Pettifogger be therefore allowed to infult, and banter them out of a folemn, judicial, Determination; ridicule it, when passed, or insolently, or ludicroufly, demand a Reverse of it? Surely this would cross intirely upon all the Measures of Authority, Rule, and Order; and the great Grievance of an Inquisition, with much likelyhood and Reafon, would fend fuch a bold Expostulator into the Fleet. The blow that

IMAGINE it now to be the Will of God, that the Great Laws of natural Religion should be senced in with any determinate System of Doctrines and Institutions, sitted for that Purpose, discover'd to the World by a Message from Heaven, and the

the Care of them entrusted with a Society of Men govern'd by proper Officers, under due Regulations; imagine it the Buliness of these Officers to attend the Study of fuch Doctrines and Institutions, with a peculiar Diligence, to give up themselves intirely to this Employment, and to have an immediate (or, however, a mediate) Commission from the Founder of this Institution, authorizing them for it: All Experience having proved to us, that natural Religion never did, and therefore in great Probability never could, fubfift without fuch Helps and Fences to it, and, that when left to it felf, it hath been app evermore to lash out into the wildest Excursions; it thence becomes highly credible, that God in his infinite Goodness to his Creatures made thus frail, would provide fome Check, would furnish some Preventive for the Overflowings of this Mischief. Now, we have before us in Fact a System admirably calculated for this Use and Service: and a Set of Persons invested with fit Powers for its Cultody and Preservation, and whose Course of Life and Study ought, esvior

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ought, in the Views of common Sense and Reason, to suppose them better qualified than others generally are, for judging and discussing any Question relating to it. Have they then no Authority, because possibly they may abuse it? Such an Inference wou'd make strange Work in any other Society. Or have they no Knowledge, because they may possibly be mistaken, whilst another Man possibly may hit the Mark which they happen to miss? See the Confequence in either of the two 'foremention'd Professions. Is no Deference due to their Skill in Controversies of Faith; or to the Powers entrusted with them for the Guardianship of their Depositum; because posfibly they may take the wrong fide of the Question, whilst a Man not bred to the Profession, nor particularly authorized to judge or act in any thing pertaining to it, may possibly fall upon the Right? Suppose him actually, as I have supposed him possibly, to be right; and confequently the Guardians (whoever they are) of the Gospel-Depositum to be wrong, both meanwhile fincerely believing themfelves Miguo

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felves to be right; and having used all Means, which were fairly in their Power to come at it: This will be a confess'd Inconvenience, from which nothing here will, in all possible Cases and Circumstances, be quite exempt. Must the Guardians here do nothing to preserve their Depositum, because private Persons will not or cannot acquiesce in their Determinations? What, upon my Scheme, will those private Persons suffer from the Guardians? Nothing at all in their Civil Rights: Nothing in their future Interests, if God, who alone is Judge of it. discerns the Sincerity of their whole Procedure, and confequently will dispense with their Attendance upon those Ordinances, from which they are thus prohibited. Somewhat, however, they must fuffer in Point of Character, from being mark'd out, by publick Authority, as a People noxious to the Society of Chrifians. But who can help this possible Inconvenience, as the World is, and as all Societies are, formed, in a State of Fallibility, and great Imperfection? Surely the possible Mischiefs which may arise from from the Government of any Society, are and should be, more easily born with, than the certain Mischiefs which must arise from a total want of it. For Anarchy is no sit Preventive of Tyranny, nor its proper Remedy; as being worse indeed than the Disease it wou'd pretend to cure.

Bur I am aware it may be faid, that the Laity are every whit as much and deeply interested as the Clergy, in the Affair of Salvation; which is certainly true. But I have a strong Suspicion, of which I cannot rid my felf, that the Bulk of Mankind will be ever as much concern'd for their Lives and Fortunes, as for any future Interests; and yet as the former Regard doth not make them Lawyers or Physicians, so neither will the latter fet them up for Divines. It may be true notwithstanding, and doubtless is fo in various Examples, that Men of Leifure, Learning and Acuteness, turning their Thoughts, tho' not bred in Form, to our Profession, may exceed very many of us in the Knowledge of it.

And we delire no Submission of their Understandings to us. I think I have fomewhere read a Concession from you, (tho' I cannot at present recollect the Passage, or the Words, 'tis couch'd in) that no Argument from outward Authority ought ever to be pleaded against intrinsick Evidence. I am perfectly of that Mind: and therefore I hope always to be ready with a reasonable Answer to every Man, who asks of me a Reason, or states an Objection, in the Spirit of Meekness. Yet at last, those Gentlemen out of the Profession, who happen to exceed us in it, might make a better Use of their Skill in it, than by applying it to expose us. If they have all Knowledge, they have not, I hope, fo engroffed it, but that we may have fome; and if they are so brim full of it, as to leave in them no Room for Instruction from us; we may still have Authority to dispense it to others, and the Bulk of Mankind may yet be the better for us. A Deference may be due, where an absolute Dependence or an implicit Resignation of the Understanding, is disowned. The

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The Measures of this Deserence can never indeed be exactly stated; they must needs be as various, as are the Circumstances, Capacities and Opportunities of the Persons respectively paying or receiving it. I would not expect the same Degree of it from a Man of Learning and Capacities equal, or superior, to my own, as I should from a plain, unletter'd, Craftsman. But yet the former's Superiority in natural or acquired Knowledge will not entitle him to insult me, or to lessen my Opportunities of being serviceable to the latter.

Cicero's Advice was rightly pointed, Quanto doction es, tanto te geras submissiòs; And 'tis a Rule, which, if it were more in Use, wou'd not be the worse for wearing.

Whatever is of Benefit and Service to the bulk of Mankind, and to the great Majority, no one should labour to depreciate, nor plead for himself an Exemption from that common Deference, which is necessary to the Support of any Office

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in its proper Honours, or to answering the Ends for which it was erected.

Ir upon Views of publick Utility, it shall appear necessary or expedient, that a Set of Men should be appointed, to instruct our People, or to guard those Fences which the Gospel hath superadded to the Scheme of natural Religion; shall fuch Men have no Authority in Cases and Questions properly before them; because it is possible that some one man, or some few Men, of distinguish'd Genius, Learning, and Capacity, may happen to fee more and farther than they do; because they are not infallible, and consequently may err in their feveral Determinations? shall no Deference be due to a Profession of Men, whose peculiar, whose authorized, Business it is to make it the Study of their Lives, and who are therefore in all the Views of common Senfe, the more likely to understand it best; merely because it is possible, that fome one, or fome few may understand it better? Were this way of Reasoning translated to any other Profession; it would

would foon appear in its proper (i. e. abfurd, ridiculous,) Colours, and no Man of Sense would bear the Mention of it. But, it feems, the Cause of Religion is become with us less popular. I fcorn to call in the Aid of the Magistrate against such as will not agree with me, that Kings were ever designed to be Nursing Fathers, or Queens Nursing Mothers to our Church. But yet, I believe till late, modern, Arguments had confounded the Notion of their being fo: the publick Religion of every Nation was always confider'd as one great Pillar of its Government; and, when Party-Prejudices are a little cooled, and common Sense returns to us, will always, I doubt not, be fo confider'd- I have no Views of Persecution, (an infamous and odious Word, too often apply'd at random) in any thing which I here have offer'd. I hope I have sufficiently guarded against any such Misconstruction. Let Men object what they foberly may; what they truly believe deserves an Anfwer; for me, and from me, if no fuperior Hand undertakes the Office, they **shall**

shall always have it in the calmest way, would they proceed in a manner, becoming every Person who thinks himfelf obliged, in Conscience, to oppose a fettled Establishment. For merely as Establishments, all (as I have confessed to you) stand with me upon an equal Foot; whatever Internal Reasons of Distinction there may be betwixt one and another. But none should be ridiculed. none should be insulted, by those who enjoy the Protection of that Government which favours fuch Settlements. And if in any Case of ludicrous Insult. and Buffonery, the Magistrate should pinch them; they may cry out upon Persecution, but they will have their Deferts. averaged to the large ferenally allered

I end this last Particular as I began it, with a full Belief and Persuasion, that I have offer'd nothing upon it, in Opposition to any thing by you advanced; only I was willing, under your Cover, to convey my Sentiments to the World, upon this important Article, when it

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came so nearly and properly within the Compass of my present Observations.

Passor myto at their hinter

I have no Attachments or Views of any fort before me, which shou'd induce me to speak, or write, any Part of the preceding Language, besides a Regard to Truth only, which, I hope, I shall always esteem facred and inviolable.

Amicus Socrates, Amicus Plato, sed magis Amica Veritas, is, hath been, and, I truft, always shall be, my own, as I doubt not of its being your, Maxim, likewise. I have been used evermore to think for my felf, affifted by fuch Lights and Helps, as the Providence of God, and that Degree of Reason which he hath vouchsafed to me, have severally afforded me; nor am I conscious of any Declarations I may have elfewhere made, which can be judged inconfistent with my prefent Sentiments, as here deliver'd to you. If any fuch shall appear, they are to go for nothing, till I have better Information: Since I can think it no Reproach, no Breach, upon the Character of a fallible lible man, to be, or to acknowledge himfelf, in fome Things mistaken. As yet however, I flatter my felf, that I am uniform; and whilft I am fo, shall always be all a learning non discoverings bus ere done to seemen all the bus explores.

Dear Sir, Dear Sir,

Fudercar y draupday is a may of which will amenation answer your elelorate Perhar-

dose drive as we set theft P heartst then other. Indeed when I survented there

Your most affectionate Friend

London 20 Decr. of a 1727. How movie event cont I foil

and faithful Servant,

NATH. MARSHAL.

P. S. If upon the Sum of this whole Debate there should appear any Diversity of Opinions between you and me, the World about us will have at least this Advantage from it, that an Instance and a Specimen may be hence produced of a Difagreement in Sentiments, without any Departure from the Measures of a common Charity, or even of the frietest Friend-

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Friendship. In your general Allowance of all Authority consistent with Private Judgment, and of all Private Judgment consistent with Authority, I agree with you intirely. The fit Restraints and Allowances of each are our only Questions.

Ir any Reader can be so weak as to imagine, that in the plain Thoughts which I here have given you upon the feveral Limits of Authority and Private Judgment, or upon the Topic of Miracles, I meant to answer your elaborate Performance on those Subjects; He must think me as much beside my self as I think bim; and fo far He and I shall be even with each other. Indeed when I first enter'd into the Defign of any Correspondence with you upon those Arguments; it was merely with a View to give you an Opportunity of explaining your felf a little more particularly than it was possible for you to do amidst the great Hurry wherein I knew you wrote your Preface. But (as it is usual in such Cases) a greater Variety of Sentiments occurred to

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to me thereupon, when I was once engaged, than I could easily foresee upon my Entrance: And when you was so good as to savour me with a Sight of your whole Performance; I judged it better that you should have in one View the Sum of what I had to offer, than that your Trouble should be repeated with any new or After-observations; from which I think you are now quite released, when I have added once more the Professions of my being with the utmost Sincerity, Esteem and Affection,

saw Marita Hugus H and Said Tours, &c. austir

as much helide my felt at I to ink him and in. M. M. h. h. h. h. N. M. h.

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other indeed when I are enter owned the Define water Outselfor with your apparation thole arguments; it was

PAG. 311 Lin. 14 for are, read is. And P. 324. L. 5. between the Words And, and exercised, r. the Power is.

s gooden Variety of Sectionents occurred

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My

one one I what we are one or grant, that I would easily torstee upon no Enfrante. And when you was fo good as to lavely me with a Sight of your whole its primance; I judged it 221 1 310 it stall block they the some in sum of that I had to other, then Thorn station I' may I take begandai. Short the toppy (63 cano) good and a second secon Habita water at a const angual faith English and The Burns and The Leven addicted to nich and with the Dense of a year in Person, to whose Adence I was an exercit Neckles pelore your County would a mate you so communicaçe year Reflei rops, I had part the interest to the form that the Subject, it is which if or calage of and energood. Paranty t perocess, so have Miles area into the security of the per your training on of the will be with pers the given you barreladition in route

CHACTER STREET AND THE

Jan. 1ft. 1727-8.

My dear Friend,

Left the Town under a Refolution of suspending all Inquiry on the Nature &c. of a Civil Establishment of Religi-

on, till you shou'd favour me with a View of those Difficulties, which you feem'd to apprehend in that Subject. But foon after I received the anonymous Letter address'd to me, and with it the Defire of a worthy Person, to whose Judgment I owe the greatest Deference. with which I prefently comply'd: And before your Leisure wou'd permit you to communicate your Reflections, I had past thro' the general Conclusions of the Subject, to which they relate. I had the good Fortune, I perceive, to have taken into my View the Difficulties you wou'd have fuggested to me, and esteem my felf happy that the Perusal of my Papers has given you Satisfaction in some of Z 4

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of them: And I thank you for laying before me, in some farther Thoughts, what yet sticks with you; tho' I cannot see Reason to alter my Conclusions.

You agree with me in the Principles I argue from; and I cannot differn any Inconfequence in my Deductions from them. What you feem chiefly to hefitate upon is, the Restraint I suppose may justly be laid on publick Disputations in Opposition to an establish'd Religion. You acknowledge my general Principle—That whatever Actions endanger the Civil Peace &c. of Society. must be subject to Civil Coercion. And you cannot but observe, that I limit the Reasons and Measures of Civil Restraint to the Appearances of fuch Danger. Thus far, then, I am willing to believe we are agreed. The only Difference I can apprehend between us on this Head is, that you feem to think fuch Disputes, be the Matter of them what it will, provided they are managed with Civility and Decency, cannot occasion such Danger. If they cannot, I have faid nothing

thing against the Permission of them by Civil Power: But I conceive the Matter of fome Arguments to be in its felf fo dangerous, that no Address or Conduct can render the Publication of them inoffensive. Of this Character I think the present Scheme offer'd us, which excludes all Establishment of Religion from Civil Society. I have observed the fatal Tendencies of this Scheme. which, I prefume, all the Manners and Civility you cou'd have prescribed to the Author, wou'd not correct. Where a Prescription is in its self Poison, the Agreeableness of the Vehicle under which 'tis recommended, is a Circumstance very far from abating the Danger of it. In fuch a Case you wou'd not, furely, advise the Magistrate, to leave the Attempt under no other Discouragement, than the 2 Odium or Contempt which the Weakness or Wickedness of it may provoke from common Censure. b The Welfare of his People depends too much

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a Pag. 302. b Pag. 303.

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upon it, to justify his Indifference or Coldness to it.

What Questions shou'd, under these Views, be absolutely prohibited, must be left to the Apprehensions of publick Wisdom.

that had thanger body sain principle IN Questions of less Importance, the Effect of publick Debates on Civil Peace &c. will depend chiefly on accidental Circumstances. You seem to think, the Conduct of the Disputants may be so regulated by Authority, as to prevent any Danger from fuch Debates. I confess I do not imagine this to be practicable; or that any stated Provisions of Law can reach the Cafe. Whatever provokes the Passions of Men, and divides them into Parties, may certainly endanger Civil Peace. These Provocations may be given, and yet all the Rules of Civility be observ'd, which 'tis possible for any Law to define and prescribe. And when you take farther with you. that the Effect of such Disputes in raifing Parties &c. will depend not only on

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on the Conduct of the Principals, but on that of their Partifans too, the Temper with which these will converse with each other on the Points debated, and the Advantages which foreign or domeflick Enemies may make of fuch Contentions; when you consider, I say, that fuch Danger may arise from these and other Incidents, which cannot be foreseen or brought under stated Rules, fince you acknowledge in general, that whenever publick Peace is endanger'd by any Action, 'tis the Right and Duty of the Magistrate to restrain it, methinks you might as well leave it to him, as I do, to act in these Cases pro re nata, and as the Appearances of Danger or Safety to the Publick shall advise.

WITH Respect to the Establishment of Religion, the only Point on which there appears to remain any Difference between us is this: You seem to think, a Liberty of publickly debating the Terms, Rules, or Laws of it shou'd never be precluded; or, as you express it, That the Hedge about it shou'd not be made so thick,

thick, that no one cou'd look thro' it. without Danger of tearing out his Eyes. But, to purfue your Allusion, if Doors enough are left open, at which all the Inquiry that can confift with the Nature of an Establishment, and the Peace and Order of Society may regularly enter, 'tis no Matter how thick or ftrong the Hedge is. I presume you wou'd not contend for a Liberty to every private Subiect, to cut a Way thro' the Hedge whereever he pleases; which must eventually destroy the whole Fence. I think, I have allow'd all the Liberty of Inquiry that can confift with any Inclosure; all that can appear necessary for the Satisfaction of any private Man's Doubts or Scruples, or to bring any Error in an Establishment under a regular Revisal.

THE Case of c Socrates is so vastly different from that in View, that I cannot imagine how an Argument can be drawn with any Parity from it. The Pagan Religion which he opposed, consisted of

e Pag. 308.

immoral and impure Rites; and the Hiflory of their Deities patronifed the most abominable Actions, destructive to private and focial Happiness, and thereby took off all Restraint of Conscience from the Commission of them. Common Charity and Humanity might offer Motives to Reason and natural Conscience, to oppose such a Religion as this, and refcue Mankind from the pernitious Influences of it. But if Socrates had oppofed fuch a Religion as the Christian. wou'd you have confider'd his Action. under the same Character you do now? If our Adversaries can make the same Objections to the Gospel, that lay against Paganism, they may then appear to act under an Obligation of Charity in oppofing it: But till then, neither the Example nor Principle of Socrates can afford them any Protection. And as to the Reformers, I have confider'd their Cafe. as far as my Argument appear'd to require, and apprehend no Inconvenience. from any Objection that can be raised from it.

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I know the Point of Distress with you on this Argument is this - If Error be got into an Establishment, bow shall it be corrected? I have d confider'd this Cafe. and see no Reason to depart from my Conclusions on it: And wou'd not willingly make what I have offer'd in general, the Materials of a personal Difpute with my Friend. I affure my felf, you would not approve a Method for the removing one Error, which wou'd probably introduce a Hundred in the Place of it; or advise the Magistrate, because he is fallible, never to rest in any Convictions, but leave himself and his Laws open to the everlafting Contradiction of every private Subject, who has a Fancy to dispute with him. e You acknowledge the Right of the Magistrate to establish such Religion as he approves; that the Laws of such Establishment stand on the same Foot with other Civil Laws: and that all Acts of Opposition to any Law, fo far as they endanger Civil Peace

d Chap. II. Sect. 9. e Pag. 301.

these Principles we agree: And when you attentively compare the Reserves to Liberty under which I deduce my Conclusions from these Principles, and the Concessions to Authority by which you must reconcile yours to them, I am persuaded, the Difference between us, if any, will be found too inconsiderable to be worth disputing.

I imagine, it escaped your Observation in the Perusal of my Papers, that I sa expressly disclaim Force or Compulsion to the Profession of any Religion, as Tertullian does in the Passage s you cite. And as to the Judgment of the Church in the Case of Priscillian, I suppose you will not affert it so far, as to conclude from it, that the Annexion of Civil Sanctions to the Censures of the Church is absolutely unlawful. If it be a Matter of prudential Consideration, the present Church has the same Right of debating and resolving it, that any other Age had;

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chap. II. Sett. 4. 2 Pag. 302.

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and the vast Diversity of Circumstances may very reasonably found a different Judgment. But with Respect to the Magistrate this Precedent can conclude nothing; his Conduct must be govern'd by Civil Regards, and the Influence of the Action on the Peace and Welfare of the Community: And as these Regards might dispose Constantine to the Behaviour you h recommend, so a Disparity of Circumstances may equally justify a different Conduct.

I with great Pleasure find your Sentiments on Authority, as a Ground of Assent, agreeable to what I formerly publish'd on that Subject, and differing only in that Spirit and Vivacity of Thought, which will always distinguish your Productions from mine.

astronal your longer out out our

What was objected by the Letter-Writer to my Method of proving the Christian Religion, appear'd so little to affect it, that I intended to excuse my

h Pag. 305.

felf from refuming that Subject: But fince you apprehend some Particulars to want either Light or Support, I thank you for giving me an Occasion to reconfider it.

spreve it by any one Medium, but it

You observe very justly, that the moral Certainty of Christianity arises from a Variety of Evidences brought together, and link'd, as you well express it, in one Chain. To a Man convinced of its Truth, the feveral Mediums by which its Credibility is proved, appear with an united Force; and his Conclufion is supported by them, as making together one Basis. But when we wou'd prove it to a Man who denies it, each Link of the Chain must be made good diffinctly; and an Argument which will lump them altogether, cannot be brought into any Form of Reasoning. Shou'd you begin the Argument with this Syllogism, --- Whatever System of Doctrines is attested by Miracles, fore: told by precedent Prophesies, recommend-

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Lette or Doctrines, fulficient vers as 120

ed by the Excellency of its Precepts &c. ought to be received as a Divine Revelation. But the Gospel was so attested, foretold, recommended, &c. If the Afsumption be denied, 'tis impossible to prove it by any one Medium, but it must be taken in Pieces, and proved distinctly by its Parts. And, in the prefent Question, I apprehend it of great Importance to the Clearness and Success of the Argument, to begin at the proper Link of the Chain, whence the rest may be deduced with due Strength and Connexion. Your Observation is apply'd to my Preface, where I consider'd only one fingle Point: But if you had taken my Sermons into your View, you might perceive, that the internal Evidences of the Gospel, such as the moral Excellency of its Precepts, the Agreeableness of its Doctrines to the divine Attributes, were not neglected, but confider'd as far as the Truth and Credibility of the Gospel depends on them. (i. e.) I have endeavour'd to shew, that no Objection can be made to the Matter of its Precepts or Doctrines, sufficient to disprove its its Credibility; which I conceive is all that need be shewn, with Respect to its internal Evidences. It any one thinks this Topick ought to be carried farther, and pres'd as a direct Proof for the Conviction of an Infidel, I must differ from Him; because I apprehend our Conclusion does not in the least require it, and which is more, can be but weakly supported by it against an Insidel. For the Principle in fuch Argument must be this, Whatever System proposes & useful and excellent Precepts, and worthily represents the Divine Attributes, is a divine Revelation. I will suppose these Characters afferted to the Gospel in full Proof: But if our Adversary can produce any other System, proposing weful and excellent Precepts, and worthily representing the Divine Attributes, I conceive, the Argument leaves him where it found him, and he has the fame Reafon, as to this Topick, to require us to admit his System to be a divine Revelation, as we have to require him to admit ours to be fo. cepts or Doctrines, Authorouge to disprove

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In offering the external Proofs of the Gospel-revelation, I insist, indeed, chiefly on that our Saviour argued from in my Text; but I observe, that 1 our Belief in our holy Religion stands assured by several concurrent Proofs of great Force; and particularly take Notice, of the m swift and wonderful Propagation of Christianity, by Instruments in their natural Powers weak and contemptible &c. and the exact Completion of our Lord's Prophesy, in such a Destruction of the Country, and such an utter Dissipation of the People, of the Jews, as no buman Sagacity cou'd foresee, and which never had an Example in any other Nation. To have pursued these Topicks, and brought in their full Evidence, I must have gone from my proper Subject. residence of the annual series

But " you feem to think I have laid a greater Weight on the Argument from Miracles than it will fairly bear. I en-

¹ Serm. p. 131. m Serm. p. 160. n p. 314.

deavour'd to o state the proper Extent and Application of this Proof, how far it concludes, and by what Objections it is barr'd. I acknowledg'd, I think as fully as you cou'd desire me, that 'tis limited and conditional; and observ'd the Limitations of it: And particularly what you mention, - P That it cannot be allow'd to overrule our natural Notions of Things, or cross upon common Sense. Physical Possibility and Impossibility are fo imperfectly known to us, that I prefume those Terms are rather relative to our Faculties, than the Nature of Things. A Polition which contradicts what I apprehend to be a plain, certain Truth, must appear to me impossible. What may be true for any Thing I can prove to the contrary, I call possible: And when such a Proposition is affirm'd to me, by a Person who gives the best Proofs I can require, that He speaks from God and with his Authority, I think I ought in Reason to assent to it; tho' without that Authority it might, upon the Ba-

[•] Serm. p. 106. P p. 314.

lance of Evidence, appear improbable. In my Sermons I fo fully declared, whar Objections or Measures of Incredibility wou'd, in my Judgment, bar the Evidence of Miracles, that no one can eafily mistake what I mean by Possibility or Impossibility. More particularly, I observ'd at large the Limitations of this Evidence with Regard to the Testimony of a precedent Revelation, the Point I disputed with the Author of Grounds and Reasons, and to which the Passage you refer to in my Preface relates. And tho' I there affert, that the Affirmation of divine Authority sufficiently prov'd wou'd render the Intention of a Prophefy credible, which the Conftruction and Import of the Words &c. wou'd possibly admit; (and I continue in the fame Sentiments) yet you will observe, that I do not put the Issue of the Question on that Possibility, but affirm the Application we contend for to have been shewn also Probable. I do not perceive. that I have strain'd the Argument from Miracles beyond its proper Force, in afcertaining the Application of the Jewish Prophe-Bastadle 2 4 4 2

Prophesies: But because this is a Point on which the Dispute, so far as it has hither to gone, appears much to depend, and you seem to apprehend me under some Dissiputies in it, I will reconsider it as distinctly as I can.

You will remember, that I acknowledge that 9 Where a former Revelation has prepared Men to expect some particular Person to be sent from God, Miracles are not a sufficient Proof that any one is that Person, unless he also answers the particular Characters, under which that Person was foretold; and confess, that ' Miracles, without a concurring Testimony from the Prophesies, are not a sufficient Evidence, that Jesus was that Prophet who shou'd come. I admit, you fee, that both Kinds of Proof are necesfary in the present Question, and that both must be shewn to bring such a Meafure of Evidence, as the Nature of the Conclusion requires from each. But I conceive it of vast Importance to the

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Miracles keyond its vickiet Porcer in at-

⁹ Serm. p. 108, 115. r Serm. p. 125.

clearing this Conclusion, at which of these two Links of the Chain we begin our Argument: And that all the Difficulty and Intanglement that may appear in the present State of the Dispute, are intirely owing to this Chicane of our Adversary's, in drawing us to begin our Process, at that Link where it regularly ought to end.

Be pleas'd, to observe with me the unavoidable Difficulties that must attend the Argument, when to convince one of our present Insidels of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, we begin our Proof from the Testimony born to it from the Jewish. In this Case, 'tis plain, this Proof must be placed on such a Ground, as it may stand by its self: For if it must derive its Strength as a Consequence from any other, that other must, in the Order of Reasoning, be first clear'd.

Office of Jesus Christ was foretold in the Jewish Prophesies, in such plain Marks

Concluding requires from each.

Marks and Descriptions as could be applied to no one elfe, and were manifestly applicable to him, this, to a Man owning the Jewish Revelation, wou'd it felf be a fair Proof of his Divine Authority, and affert to him all that Regard and Submission, which that Revelation required to the Person so foretold. But if these Marks and Characters are applicable to feveral Persons and Events, it will be hard to oblige an Adversary to admit our Conclusion, in Consequence of fuch Testimonies. All that can firially be inferr'd from them is, that Jesus might be meant in them; and so, he will tell us, might any of those other Persons, to whom they were applicable. Before he will be convinced by these Testimonies, we must fix them to Jesus Christ. and bring him to this Dilemma, that either he must disown the Tewish Revelation, or own, in Consequence of it, the Divine Authority of Jesus Christ. And upon what Principles shall we do this? If we argue with him from the literal Import and Construction of the Words in the Prophesies appeal'd to, He has Ekbouano-

another Import, and another Conftruaion which he thinks as probable as ours; and may perhaps deny that they were at all Prophesies, and contend they were only historical Relations of Facts and Persons, to whom they may be accommodated. If we observe to him, that the lews from immemorial Tradition confider'd them as Prophefies of some future Person, He may demand from us the Ground of this Tradition. If the first Authors of it collected this Meaning from the Force and Construction of the Words, the Words remain, and the Reafons and Foundation of that Construction may be shewn from them still. If we argue from a Prefumption that this Tradition was derived down from the Prophetick Age, the Proof of this will be demanded; and when the Fact is proved, the Force of the Argument will either still rest on the Justness of the Exposition from the Import of the Words, &c. or the Authority of the Expositor. Mere human Authority will have little Weight in this Case; and if you put it on a Prefumption of Divine Authority, that the Buow ExposiExposition was first given by some Prophet, you come then into my way of arguing, and I may ask, why the Authority of Christ and his Apostles, whose Inspiration we can prove, is not as good as the Authority of some other inspired Person, we know not who. Hitherto we have considered the Person we dispute with, as acknowledging the Jewish Revel lation; and I think the Difficulties of convincing him by the fingle Force of this Proof, are not inconsiderable, even upon this Hypothesis. But suppose him to deny the Jewish Revelation; Here the Foundation of the Argument is taken away at once. For when we deduce a latter Revelation from a former, the whole Strength of the Conclusion rests primarily on the Truth and Certainty of that Revelation, from which we argue; and till this is either granted or proved. there can be no Process. Our present Adversaries very artfully concealed this Referve, till they prefumed the Dispute was throughly engaged upon the Foot they defired, and drawn off from its proper Ground. It was easie to foresee they wou'd

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wou'd bring it to this Issue, as I think they have done now pretty plainly.

WELL; but perhaps you will convince them by these Prophesies themselves, compared with the Completion of them. I acknowledge, a Prophely fulfill'd is a good Proof of the Inspiration of the Prophet: And if the Jewish Revelation foretells, and is fulfill'd in Jefus Chrift. this will conclude both ways, and prove both the lewish Revelation and the Christian: But then each Part of the Argument must be clearly proved, before it will convince an Infidel to both. 1/2. It must be proved, that the Passages we appeal to, were Prophefies. 2dly, That they had that distant Intention we affign to them, and cannot, without some manifest Absurdity, be understood otherwise. Several Arguments which have been used in this Question, will, I doubt, fignify little to fuch an Adverfary. If we observe, that the Sense and Intention we assign, is preferable to others, as more agreeable to the Majefly of God &c. He will answer that 5 Low he

he does not believe God to be the Author of them, and that this is the very Point we are to prove by these Prophesies. Well, but they are capable of no consistent Sense or Intention, unless we admit this: But may he not tell us, he is not bound to allow they have any Sense at all, or to consider them any otherwise than as dark ambiguous Rhapfodies, capable of various Applications, and design'd to be so for political Ends, to lead or restrain the Superstition of that People, as Occasions of Government might from Time to Time require?

"But the Exactness of the Comple"tion does it self prove, the Passages
"appeal'd to to have been Prophesies
"and to have had the particular Inten"tion we assign to them." 'Tis acknowledged, it does so, when the Characters or Events foretold, cou'd not humanly be foreseen; cou'd not be counterseited,
or accommodated by a Person, who had
these Passages before him, to himself
or another; and cannot be shewn, to be
otherwise sulfill'd. But a Desect in either of these Points will render the Argument

gument inconclusive to an Infidel. Suppose no Objection cou'd be made on the first Head, yet the second wou'd admit many. (e.g.) We appeal to those Prophelies that Christ should be an Israelite, of the House of David, born at Bethlebem. These are determinate Chara-Gers; but might not any Family who deduced their Lineage from David, have concerted this Appearance, with a Defign to fet up a Son for fuch a Prince, as the lews are allowed fome time to have expected? 'Tis plain, thefe Marks wou'd have agreed to any one of the House of David, born at Bethlehem. Besides, you know 'tis objected, that the Prophefy it felf whence this Mark is collected, does not, either from the Construction or Connexion of the Words, necessarily require this Intention, but is good Sense without it. The Jews, indeed, in our Saviour's Time understood this Place of the Messiah; to them this Circumstance of his Birth was a necessary Mark of him, and the Correspondence of our Saviour's Birth to it was one good Argument for their Convi-Stion.

aion. But the Persons we dispute with will, as I have faid, require the Grounds of their Exposition. If we derive it from Prophefy, the Argument will reft on my Grounds; and the Force of the Words will hardly oblige fuch an Adversary to allow it: And if our Lord had not been born at Bethlehem, we shou'd scarce have admitted that this Prophefy required he should be. If other determinate Characters are appeal'd to, fuch as being born of a Virgin &c. Suppose all Difficulties with Regard to the Meaning of the Terms and the distant View we assign to the Prophely got over, the Completion of it in Fact will be very hardly made appear, but upon my Grounds, the Testimony of Persons whose Inspiration is proved by fufficient Evidence. And as to those general Descriptions of the Messiah in figurative Characters, some Uncertainty in their Application cannot be denied. We our felves admit many of them to have related, in their first View, to other Persons and Events, but contend, they had a fecondary or typical View to the Mefngsh

Messiah. In short, whoever attends to these few Reflections, will, I think, perceive great Difficulty at least, to give this Argument from the Prophesies and their Completion such Force from its own Light, as to convince an Infidel, who denies both the Jewish and Christian Revelation, of the Truth of both. When the Question is put upon the fingle Issue of this Argument, from the Correspondence between the Prophesies and Events, by which we contend they were fulfill'd, the Parts must fit like two Tallies; the great Marks and Lineaments, at least, must answer exactly, and be unapplicable to any thing elfe. I will not fay it is impossible to do this, with fuch Evidence and Certainty as the Conviction of fuch an Adversary requires, who is prepared to dispute every Inch of Ground, and allow no Inference which can be avoided; I only fay, I wou'd not undertake to do it, neither does my Method of proving the Christian Revelation require it shou'd be done.

For thus I argue. I take for my Ground, That the Miracles, and whatever

ever other direct Evidence you shall think fit to add to them,) prove the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, provided nothing be affirmed by them in their Doctrine, inconsistent with the Character of a Divine Revelation. This is f granted me by my Adversary, and I think by syour self; and I desire no more.

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IF I prove the Christian Revelation, 'tis plain, I need no other Argument to prove the Jewish, since 'tis expressy affirm'd by it. For the Testimony of a latter Revelation is, in its natural Force, as good a Proof of a former, as the Testimony of a former can be of a latter. The Testimony of God is certainly as conclusive one way as the other; but in the present Case, the Application of this Proof from the latter Revelation to a former will be much more clear and certain; because the latter, the Christian Revelation bears Testimony to the former in clear express Terms, whose

¹ Litt. Sch. &c. p. 310, 311. 1 p 315.

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Meaning and Intention cannot be deny'd: but the former, the Jewish, bears no other Testimony to the latter, than by foretelling it under fuch Marks and Deferiptions, whose Application is disputed. If my Opponent denies both Revelations. vet if He grants (as I presume he must do upon his own Grounds) that the Testimony of a latter, when proved, establishes the former, then 'tis manifest, I have nothing to do but to prove the latter; and I have gain'd thus much at least, that all his Chicane of carrying away the Question from the direct Proofs of the Christian Revelation, and requiring us to prove it by Deduction from the Jewish, by which alone he has rais'd all this Duft, is defeated; and he is brought back to the Point he would avoid, the direct Proofs of the Christian Revelation.

Well; but to bar this Argument, and invalidate the Credit of the Christian Religion, He objects, "That Jesus" Christ, from whom we derive this Re"velation, and on whose divine Autho"rity

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" rity it depends, affirms himself to be " a Person antiently soretold in the " Jewish Prophesies, under the Chara-" Eter of a Messiah: And if he fallisses in " this, he cannot be that inspired Person " we take him for; His Mission is dif-" proved, neither can Miracles or any " other direct Proofs convince us, that " He who tells us a Lie, is infallible or " speaks with divine Authority". This I take to be the Objection in its full Force. If this Objection is removed, the direct Proofs of the Christian Revelation stand in their proper, natural Strength; and therefore, 'tis evident, that my Affertion of those Proofs no farther obliges me to consider the Testimony of the Jewish Revelation to Christ, than is necessary to satisfy and remove this Objection.

I will put a Case of Fact, which will clearly shew, and exemplify the State of the Question on this Foot. Suppose a Person was convinced by the Sight or Report of Christ's or his Apostles Miracles, or other proper direct Evidence,

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that

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that Christ acted and spake with divine Authority, was a Teacher fent from God. upon this Ground St. Paul's Converts at Athens believed in Christ, and their Belief must be thus far acknowledged rational, both by your felf and the Author of Literal Scheme; but then, in Reproof of this Conclusion, it might be suggested to them, " That Christ assumed " the Character of a Messiah, a Person " foretold to the Jews; that this Pre-" tension had no Foundation or Support, " and therefore he declared a Falsity to " them in the Name of God, which 'twas " impossible God shou'd affirm: And " consequently the Affirmer, notwith-" standing these apparent Evidences, " cou'd not be from God; and they must " have been, some Way or other, impo-" fed on in these Evidences". In this Case it is manifest, that, by all Rules of Reasoning, it lies on the Objecter so far to make good his Charge of Fallity, that when any Prophefy or Prophefies are appeal'd to, as afferting this Charaeter to Christ, He must shew that the Conclusion from them cannot be true. For

For the whole Force of his Objection lies in this, - That Christ has affirm'd a Falshood. When a Prophesy is appeal'd to in Support of Christ's Affirmation, the Objecter must shew, that the Appeal cannot support it, that the Conclusion from it cannot be true; otherwise he cannot prove the Affirmation false, as his Objection obliges him to do. The Cafe appears to me the same, as when any of the Mysteries of our Faith are objected, in Bar to the direct Proofs of the Chriftian Revelation. To remove this Objection we do not think our felves obliged, to prove a priori that the Article is True, by the Evidence of its own Light: But our Answer is, -It contradicts no clear Principle or Conclusion of Reason; it may be true, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, and therefore our finding it in the Christian Revelation cannot support an Objection of Falshood against that Revelation, as affirming what 'tis impossible God shou'd affirm. It may be true, and therefore may be affirm'd by God; and if we have fufficient direct Proofs that God has affirm'd

Bb 3

it, this Objection cannot set aside, or invalidate those Proofs. If we can go still farther, and shew that the Article may be deduced, as a probable Conclusion, from natural Principles of Reason and Philosophy, this must be acknowledged of excellent Use, as a full Consutation of the Objection, which leaves no room for Doubt or Hesitation: But strictly speaking, 'tis ex abundanti; and the Objection is fairly discharged, unless he who makes it, shews the Proposition affirm'd to be absolutely salse.

Thus it is in the present Question; an Affirmation of Christ and his Apostles that he was a Messiah foretold is objected to as a Falshood, and therefore what barrs the Evidence of his Miracles and other Proofs of his divine Mission. We appeal to Prophesies in Support of this Assirmation; and therefore, to make good the Objection, it must be shewn, that, notwithstanding this Appeal, the Assirmation is still false. Upon what Topicks then can the Objecter argue this? Why?

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in this Objection conforder andres in the

If. He may deny the Jewish Revelation, and consequently that the Passages we appeal to, were divine Propheses. But since, as I observed, if the Christian Revelation be proved, the Jewish is proved by the Testimony of the Christian, and the Christian is proved, if this Objection is discharg'd, the Truth of the Jewish must stand still in Supposition, and wait on the Validity or Invalidity of this Objection.

adly, IT may be and is urged, that, supposing these Passages to be divine Prophefies, yet they have no Relation to any fuch future Person as a Messiah; and therefore that 'tis a Falshood, to affirm that lefus Christ was foretold in them under that Character. But is it shewn impossible from the Construction of the Words, from the Circumstances of History, or from any Rules of Criticism, that these Prophesies might relate to a future Meffiah? If 'tis possible they might have fuch Intention, then 'tis possible the Affirmation may be true, that they had B b 4

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had such Intention. If it may be true, God may affirm it; and if we have as good Evidence as can be given us, that God does affirm it, his Authority will oblige us to believe it true. God cannot affirm a Falshood, but what we cannot perceive or prove to be false, we cannot pronounce to be false, and consequently cannot object it in Bar to direct Proofs of God's affirming it.

WE are told, these Predictions are applicable to other Persons and other Events, as well as to a future Messiah: Be it fo, to Twenty if they please: But still if they are capable of this Application, can they prove him a Liar, who affirms this Intention? And if he gives the best Proofs imaginable of his speaking with divine Authority is not that Authority a sufficient Proof of fuch Intention? In order to invalidate this Objection, I do not apprehend, that we are obliged to prove by Arguments a priori, that the Prophefy must necessarily have had such Intention, or cou'd not consistently be understood in any other; this, indeed, may entrings be

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be required from him who argues from these Prophesies as his Principle, and in Force of this fingle Evidence, will convince our present Infidels of the Truth of the Christian Revelation: But in my Way of Reasoning we are on quite another Foot. We suppose the Miracles Sc. of Christ to be sufficient direct Proofs of his Mission, unless they are barr'd by any Objection of Strength enough to fet them aside; as such an Objection, we confider the Suggestion of Falsity against Christ, in affirming that he was foretold in Prophefies, which had no Relation to him, or any other Person under the Character which he affumed It lies upon the Objecter to support his Suggestion, and prove, that the Prophesies are incapable of being understood with any such Relation or Intention. Till this is done, the Charge of Falsity is not maintain'd, and the direct Proofs stand in their proper Force. His affigning Twenty or a Hundred other Intentions, with which they may be capable of being understood, signifies nothing. If they are capable of the Intention 1-490

tention Christ affirms them to have had, the direct Evidences of his Mission affert divine Authority to his Affirmation, and prove that, whatever other Applications they may be capable of, this was that intended by God. The Objection, I fay, is discharged, if we go no farther than this; but if we can shew farther, that this Intention of the Prophelies may very probably be collected from the Construction and Connexion of the Words, Circumstances of History, antient Traditions, or any other Rules of Criticism, This not only takes away all Colour or Pretense from the Objection of Falsity, but, consider'd with the Support it receives, from the Affirmation of a Person whose divine Authority is assur'd by proper Evidences, is a fatisfactory Proof to any reasonable Man, that the Prophefy had fuch Intention.

You see, how far my Way of Reasoning is from refusing, as superfluous, the Arguments offer'd in direct Assertion of the Intention of the Prophesies, from the Traditions of Jews, or any critical Collections which

which may explain their View, or place them in such a Series and Connexion, as may shew them to give Light and Testimony to each other. Neither you nor any Man more fincerely honours those great Ornaments of our Church you mention, than I do; and tho' I assure my felf your Collections on this Subject wou'd appear very worthy of publick View, yet I agree with you, in thinking, that the R. R. the Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry and the Reverend and Learned the Dean of * Chichefter have given that Part of the Argument, the full Measure of Evidence it can be required to have. No Man has gone before them, in their feveral Topicks, with equal Success; and I presume none will come after them with greater: But I hope, these venerable Persons will pardon me if, with all Deference, I observe to them, where, I imagine, those excellent Forces they have brought into the Field, may be apply'd with the greatest Effect and Impression on the Adversary. When the necessary Postulata in their

^{*} Now the Worthy and R R. Ld. Bp. of Bangor.

Arguments, and particularly the Truth of the Jewish Revelation, are granted, they conclude with great Probability. Their Key passes thro' the Difficulties of the Question, and opens them very fairly: But their Adversaries also bring Keys, not altogether unfit, and which Persons of great Learning and Character, such as Grotius, have prefer'd to all others. I think the Solutions of our Friends more probable: But I cannot say, those offer'd by their Adversaries, are without some Appearance also of Probability. And tho', as you justly observe, the Question in its Nature neither admits nor requires more than probable Proofs, yet when there are Probabilities against Probabilities, I doubt, it will be difficult, upon the fingle Issue of these Proofs, to shew such an Overbalance on our Side, as may convince or filence these perverse Disputers. And when they come to their Strength of Referve, and deny the Jewish Revelation, the Foundation of the Argument on this Foot is subverted, and must be made good by Proofs a priori: A Task which, tho' I do not think impossible

yet I had rather be excused from. But now, in my Way of reasoning, this Difficulty, be it more or less, is wholly avoided; and the Probabilities afferted by our Friends, are so applied, as to render them effectually decisive of the Question. For my Argument requires only that the direct Proofs of Christ's Mission shou'd be deliver'd from this Objection, offer'd in Bar to them, viz. "That Christ, in affirming himself to be foretold to the " Jews under the Character of a Messiah, " affirm'd a Falshood, and therefore " cou'd not speak from God, or with " divine Authority:" And this Objection is supported, by alledging that the Prophesies appeal'd to had no Relation to any fuch future Person. Now, if there be no Contradiction, nothing that renders the Affirmation that the Prophefies had fuch Intention manifestly falfe, I think, the direct Proofs of Christ's Mission are, even on these Terms, sufficient to overrule this Objection: But when it is farther shewn, that the Intention affirm'd by Christ, is not only free from any Inconsistencies, but even according

ding to the best Rules of Criticism the most probable that can be affign'd to these Passages, the Objection is absolutely and fully fubdued, and the direct Proofs of Christ's Mission are restored to that Strength, which, 'tis confess'd, they wou'd have, if not barr'd by this Objection. You will observe, then, that I am far from separating my self from those worthy Defenders of our Faith, or affecting to act an independent Part from them. Quite otherwise, I call them in to my Aid in a very important Point, and with the greatest Honour and Gratitude acknowledge the full Decision of it to their Services. For fince they have prov'd it probable upon its own Grounds, that Probability not only intirely removes the Objection of Falsity out of my Way, but, when confider'd as affirm'd by a Person who has given full direct Proofs of his divine Inspiration, becomes a Certainty. Such Light and Strength do these Topicks, in their proper Order, bring to each other.

But then it must be remember'd, that with this Assistance we are got no farther

ther yet, than to discharge that Allegation of the Objection, that the Prophefies appeal'd to had no Relation to any fuch Person as Christ assum'd, and pretended to be foretold in them. It remains fill to be shewn that Christ might be that Person. For admitting such a Person to be foretold, yet if the Marks and Characters given of him are unapplicable to Christ, he will still be convinced of Falfity, in affirming himfelf to be that Person. Other Proofs of his divine Mission will not prove him to be that Person; nay his Affirmation that he is the Person describ'd must appear a Falfity, and confequently invalidate the direct Proofs of his Mission, the' they might otherwise be conclusive of it. But then these Characters must be certain and determinate, the Meaning and Import of them agreed in; For if the Defcription admits feveral Meanings, and 'tis capable of being applied to Christ in any one which the Words will bear, Christ cannot be convinced of Falsity in affirming himself to be the Person describ ded men series than at as dance

WHEN the Words admit fuch Varies ty of Applications, it will, indeed, be difficult to shew a Priori from the Force of this Prophefy, that he was the Person intended: But 'tis fufficient to discharge an Objection of Falsity, if for any Thing that appears to the contrary, he might be the Person intended. The Marks, indeed, are applicable to several others, but they are also applicable to him in a very confistent Sense; and therefore 'tis very possible they might be meant of him. And if they might be meant of him, He cannot be convinc'd of Falsity, in affirming they were meant of him. The Objection, in this State, admits that there are Prophesies of a Messiah, but denies that they are fulfilled in Christ. If our Adversaries can produce any Paffage from the Jewish Writings, which we allow, or they can prove, to have been a Prophefy of the Messiah, and thew that the Character and Circumstances in which our Lord appear'd, are irreconcilable to it, this, indeed, wou'd be fuch a Disproof of his Pretensions, as the the Evidence of his Miracles cou'd not overrule. I agree to your Observation, - That wif a Miracle were wrought, authorizing the Application of any Prophesy to a Meaning far remote from all the Rules of common Sense, the Genius of Language, the Construction of the Words, and the Contexture of the whole Discourse, the Difficulty of determining Assent in this Case wou'd be, at least, as great as you represent it. A Miracle cannot make Words signify, what they cannot by any Rules of Construction be understood to signify. Upon the Testimony of a Person who gives me sufficient Proofs of his divine Inspiration. I may reasonably believe a Book written in Cypher, or in a Language I do not understand, to be a Prophesy of fome certain Event. When I come to understand this Cypher or Language, if I cannot, by any Rules of Construction, perceive that the Words can be accommodated to that Event, or cou'd have any Relation to it; I must necessarily conclude, that this Perfon affirm'd a Falf-

hood,

hood, and that I had been imposed on in the Evidences upon which I believ'd his Inspiration. But if I perceived the Words, in any Way or Scheme of writing or speaking which obtain'd in the Time and Country in which that Book was presum'd to have been wrote, to be applicable to the Event affign'd, I might justly believe, upon his Authority, that this Event was intended to be prefignify'd by them. I cou'd have no Ground to charge him with Falsity, or on that Account to retract my Belief of his Inspiration. And the Words were shewn capable of Ten other Applications, yet if they were also capable of this, the Testimony of a Person who had given me full direct Proofs of his speaking from God, must, in all Reason, determine me to this.

Where the common Meaning and Construction of the Words is plain enough, yet the Application of them, as a Prophesy, may be uncertain; and yet be very reasonably determinable by the Affirmation of a Person whose divine Autho-

Authority is sufficiently prov'd. Suppose the Case of Philip and the Eunuch. The Eunuch believ'd the Inspiration of Isaiah, He understood the common Import of the Words well enough; but what he wanted to know was, * of whom the Prophet spake, whether of himself or some other Man. He was uncertain whether it was at all a Prophefy, or, if it was, to whom it refer'd. Suppose then Philip to produce direct Proofs of his divine Mission, and upon the Authority of it to tell him, that these Words were intended by the Spirit to foretel a future Messiah. I think you will not deny his Authority thus prov'd, to be a sufficient Ground of Assent thus far. He goes on then, and perfuades him to apply them to Jesus Christ, whom he preach'd to him. If the Eunuch cou'd not perceive any Manner of Correspondence between what the Words in any reasonable Construction signified. and the Circumstances and Events of Christ's Life or Death, tho' he might

^{*} Ads viii. 34.

not immediately revoke the Credit he had given to Philip's Mission, yet I confess, he would be under all the Distress you suppose on that Point: But this He must necessarily conclude, that he did not yet understand the Words: That some other Key or Rule of Expofition than he yet knew must be given him: neither was it possible for them, in his present View of them, to amount to a Proof that our Lord was a Person antiently foretold in them. But when Philip cou'd shew him, that there was a fair Correspondence between the Characters and Events describ'd in the Words. and the Circumstances of Christ's Life. I do not see what farther Proof he cou'd want of his Conclusion. The Proofs he had of Philip's Mission from God, are before supposed to be a just Ground of Affent, to his Affirmation that the Paffage consider'd was a Prophely of a future Messiah. In the Application of it to Christ there is no Inconsistency or Repugnancy, which cou'd convince Philip of Falshood, and on that Account overrule the direct Proofs of his Mission; on the . the contrary there is a very fair Correfpondence between the Prediction and the Event: and tho' we shou'd suppose an equal Correspondence to be shewn in Ten other Applications, yet the divine Authority of Philip, supported by Evidences in their Nature of fufficient Force to prove it, and not barr'd by any just Objection, might and, if he wou'd act rationally, must determine him to this. The same Spirit that dictated the Prophefy, must appear to affirm the Application of it: And he who would persuade him to prefer any other to it, must be able to convince him, that He knew better what God intended in the Prophefy, than God himfelf did. do not tee what father Proof he could

Upon the whole, I flatter my felf, that what I have offer'd, will fatisfy you. that I begin the Argument at that Link of your Chain, whence it may proceed with the greatest Strength and Advantage, and with all the Support from other Topicks which the Nature of the Question requires. That in this Way of reasoning many considerable Difficulties no conflict Press Ins Milhon con area

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are avoided; the Prophelies brought to bear their proper Measure of Evidence, and the Issue of the Question put on that Point, from which our Adversaries have endeavour'd to remove it, the direct Proofs of the Christian Revelation.

and distortions of the Property subjects

I do not apprehend, that the Defence of Christianity requires us to prove that every Passage of the Old Testament referr'd to in the New, was appealed to as a Prophefy, and is applicable as fuch. For, as I formerly y observed (and I have the pleasure to find 2 you concur with me) It is very reasonable to suppose, that the Writers of the New Testament might in their Recital of feveral Passages of the prophetick Books intend only Illustration, or Accommodation. And that fome of those appeal'd to as Proofs were fo upon the Concessions of the Jews, and might properly be urged, as fuch, for their Convicton. But shou'd we be able to give no other Account than this of fome of the Applications objected to; Smileka Wen Remain Constitution

y Serm. p. 122. 2 p. 319.

vet still there will remain enough, not only free from any fuch Objection of Repugnancy or Inconfiftency as wou'd convince the Appeal of Falfity, and thereby superfede the direct Proofs of Christ's Divine Mission, but where the Relation and Intention of the Prophely which Christ's or his Apostles Appeal to it requires, is more rationally collected from the most proper Rules of Criticism, than any that is offer'd in Opposition to it But suppose these Appearances only equal, and that the Balance hung even in this Respect; yet when we add to our Scale the Authority of Persons, whose Divine Inspiration is attested by the best direct Proofs, not overruled by any Objection of Force enough to fet them aside, such a Preponderancy must decide the Question with every rational Man, and our Probabilities fo supported become certain and indubitable Conclusions. We transfer that the man is the second

I cannot, with my best Attention, perceive any Objection that can oblige me to depart from this Way of Reasoning:

to any note indicate notice or allowed

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But I have, with some Surprize, met with one from Persons whose Judgment I very much honour, which I will consider rather from a Regard to them, than to any Weight that appears in it. The Objection is this,— "That my Conclusion "rests on the Testimony of Christ to himself: He assirms himself to be forestold in antient Prophesies, and I determine the Intention of those Prophesies by his Assirmation." To which I answer,

the Applications which Christ himself made of the antient Prophesies, and not those made by his Apostles, whose Inspiration was prov'd by their own Miracles &c. independently on those wrought by Christ. Their Affirmation is plainly an external Testimony; and I wou'd ask whether if Haggai or Malachi had affirmed of a dubious Passage in Isaiah, capable of several Applications, that 'twas intended by the Spirit of God to foretel a future Messiah, this wou'd not have been argued from as a decisive Proof

of the Intention of that Prophefy. If indeed it was irreconcilable to the Words, their Authority cou'd not give it any Appearance of that Intention: But if the Words, in a probable Sense and Construction, were capable of that Relation, their Authority wou'd certainly be pleaded as a full determination of this Point, to all who own'd their Inspiration. All Conclusions from the Jewish Traditions in this Question must acknowledge the Force of fuch an Argument. The chief Probability of that Topick arises, as I have observed, from a Prefumption that those Traditionary Expofitions and Applications of the Prophefies were derived down from the prophetick Age, and confequently refts ultimately on the Authority of some Perfon supposed to be inspired. Now if fuch a Prefumption, where the Proof of Fact must be very imperfect, is allowed fome Weight, much greater, and fuch as upon these Grounds will be decisive, must be allowed to the plain Affirmation of a Person, whose Inspiration is confess'd. But if the Authority of Haggai

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Case, I wou'd then ask, why the Authority of St. Paul or St. Peter is not as decisive? The Testimony of God has the same Force from one Man's Mouth, as from another's: And I presume, we are at least as capable of proving the Divine Inspiration of St. Peter or St. Paul, as of Haggai or Malachi.

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felf to this very Objection, when made by the Jews, is strong beyond all Possibility of Reproof. They object—

Thou bearest Record of thy self, therefore thy Record is not true. He replies—

The Father that sent me beareth witness of me. And in another Place, The works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear witness of me.— And again, The Father, who dwelleth in me, He doth the Works. If ye believe not me, believe the Works. He very justly distinguishes between his Assirmation, and the Testimony born by God to his

Job. 8. 13. & 18. b Job. 10. 25. c Job. 14. 10.
Job. 10. 38. See alfo Job. 5. 31, 35, 37.

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Affirmation. His Affirmation, as to its own unsupported Credibility, was only the Affirmation of a Man; but the Telfimony born to it by those Works, was His who performed the Works; and since the Finger of God was evident in the Works, the Testimony of God was evident in them too.

Suppose a Person sent by a Prince to fome Province of his Dominions, with a full authentick Commission to instruct the People of it in feveral Particulars, and, among others, to ascertain the Meaning and Intention of some former Law not fully understood by them. Such a Person's bare Affirmation of his having fuch Authority from the Prince, wou'd weigh little: But when he produced the broad Seal, and the most undeniable Evidences of his Commission, this, I presume. wou'd be allow'd an external Testimony to him, and affert the Prince's Authority to what he faid in Execution of his Commission. If in explaining the Meaning and Intention of that former Law, He affign'd a Sense to it, irreconcilable to the .

the Import of the Words by any Rules of Construction, or contradictory to any other Law, or which represented this as requiring any unjust or pernitious Actions from them, common Sense would not fuffer them, to receive this as the real Meaning of a Wife, Just, and Gratious Prince: And they might more reasonably fuspect some Imposture or Forgery in the Commission, the' they cou'd not discern it, than admit so incredible a Doctrine as authorised by it. But if the Exposition he gave them, was fuch as the Words wou'd very well bear, tho' different from what they before thought most probable, I presume, no Objection cou'd arise from it fufficient to supersede the Evidences of his Commission, or even render them fuspitious: And they wou'd be obliged to admit his Exposition, not merely as His, but as the Prince's who fent him: Who certainly knew his own Intention better than they did, and must be suppofed to have imparted it to this Person, who brings fuch unexceptionable Proofs of a Mission from Him. I think these Cases are parallel, as far as my Argument requires;

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requires; and that our Lord's Miracles are as distinct a Testimony from his own Assirmation of his Character, as the King's broad Seal is from the other's Assirmation of His: And that the Expositions or Applications of the Prophesies which Christ assirms, under these Evidences of his divine Mission, are as justly to be consider'd as God's own Applications, as the other's Exposition of the Law is to be esteem'd the Prince's.

them, was foch as the Worls

I shall rely on what I have suggested to you in the preceding Pages, to answer for me to those poor Objections, which the e Letter-Writer makes to my reasoning on this Argument in my Fisth Sermon. I observe only, that He changes my Conclusion, and suggests one of his own in the Place of it, viz. That Christ and his Apostles cited the Prophesses of the Old Testament in their literal Sense: And then endeavours to shew that I do not prove, what I never profess'd or meant to prove. In the Place

e Lett. p. 67.

he cites, I suppose a Jew arguing with our Saviour, and contesting his Application of fome of the Passages appeal'd to from the Prophets upon the Objections now made. f The Question (I fay) is whether the Prophet in such Passage had any View to the Meffiah or not. For (as I go on) 'tis not pretended, that there is any Prophesy of the Messiah which cannot be apply'd to Christ, nor is a sufficient Correspondence deny'd between the Places cited and the Circumstances and Events of Christ's Life; but the Dispute is whether those Passages had, in their first Intention, any Relation to the Meffiah. Then follow the Words he cites, Can any Argument in the Nature of the Thing be more decisive of this Question than the Testimony of God? &c. The Conclusion to which my Argument is apply'd, is here twice repeated; He cou'd not miftake it. If he can shew the Argument inconclusive, let him do it; but to what purpose does He observe that it does not prove a Conclusion, which I had no

f Serm. p. 128.

Thought nor Occasion to prove? If the Passage indeed cannot, under any Rule of Construction or Exposition, admit the Intention assign'd to it, the Testimony I argue from, will not prove fuch Intention: But if, according to any Way of speaking obtaining among the antient Jews in their prophetick Writings, whether proper or figurative, literal, typical, or allegorical it is capable of being confiftently understood with this Intention; my Argument is equally served by either. But it feems, it does not prove that Christ and his Apostles interpreted the Prophesies in their literal Sense; I am not at all concern'd whether it does or not; but I observe, that where the Prophesies are capable of the Intention affign'd in their literal Sense, it proves that Intention in their literal Sense: Where they are capable of it in any other Sense, consistent with fuch Schemes of Speech as were used by those Writers, it proves it in that Sense. And if it proves it in any confiftent Sense, it proves as much as I defire it should do.

Thought.

1 Serie 10 128.

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METHINKS, if this Gentleman had nothing more to offer in Reproof of my Argument than this, He might as well have contented himself, with replying as 8 He does to my next Sermon; where He tells me, I ought in Humanity to excuse him from answering me, till I take off my threatned Restraint, and declare my self to think, that Men ought not to be restrain'd from speaking. No doubt whoever reads his Letter, and fees with what Freedom he has appear'd in Support of that wild Scheme of Liberty, which I censured as an Affront to the Laws of our Establishment, and an Infult on the Constitution, will believe he has here given us the true Reason of his Silence.

most affectionately yours,

J. ROGERS.

* Lett. p. 75.

FINIS.